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AN

# EXPOSITION AND DEFENCE

OF THE

# PRESBYTERIAN FORM

OF

# CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

IN REPLY TO EPISCOPAL AND INDEPENDENT WRITERS.

BY THE

REV. DAVID KING, LL.D.

GLASGOW.




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TO

## JOHN HENDERSON, ESQ.

OF PARK.

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*My Dear Sir,*

*You have, in the Dedication of this Work to you, a token of the value which I attach to your ever-faithful friendship, and to the great encouragement which your most kind co-operation has afforded me in the discharge of varied duty.*

*That you may be long spared to be a blessing to your friends; to promote abounding charity among all the friends of Christ; to give effective countenance to pure literature and evangelical religion; and to carry on those measures of benevolence which are the honour of our day and country—and some of which, under God, owe their being to none so much as to yourself—is the fervent desire and prayer of,*

*My Dear Sir,*

*Your Friend and Pastor,*

DAVID KING.

# PREFACE.

A VOLUME which I published some years ago on the Ruling Eldership of the Christian Church was partly argumentative and partly practical. The argumentative part elicited some strictures from Drs Wardlaw and Davidson. In preparing a new edition I was led to reply to such objections; but I found the work assuming both a magnitude and a controversial character, altogether unsuitable to a simple manual for elders. I therefore changed my plan, and made the Third Edition of my treatise on the Eldership more specially didactic, with only a brief statement of the proof for the office of Ruling Elder, of which I there delineate the duties, and intimated my intention to merge the reasoning formerly employed, in such a general defence of Presbyterian Church Government as is now offered to the public.

Under the circumstances just stated, I might

have made a free use of that portion of my former volume which accorded with my present design, since it was not to re-appear otherwise. But renewed examination of the subject led me into new trains of thought, proof, and illustration; and the result is, that few passages are common to the two treatises.

From the title of this volume the reader will be prepared to find that I take decided views, and vindicate one system of polity in preference to others. It does not follow that I advocate an existing Presbyterianism unqualifiedly and indiscriminately—that I perceive everything among ourselves to be right, and all things in which our neighbours differ from us to be wrong. Such partisanship will never promote the discovery of truth, or bring our debates by one step nearer to a conclusion.

We are sadly ignorant of ourselves, and frequently we know not what spirit we are of. That I have nowhere in these pages transgressed the laws of christian charity and courtesy, I dare not assert. But I have certainly aimed to treat opponents respectfully, to meet their arguments fairly, and to offer no reply to the reader which

I did not feel, on calm reflection, to be satisfactory to myself.

While I have defended Presbyterianism in the honest belief that it is defensible on good grounds, though admitting in various points of nearer approximation to the primitive model, I have rejoiced to find, that without under-estimating a single argument, or compromising one iota of my convictions, I have been induced to moderate, in several important particulars, my estimate of denominational differences; and I would reckon myself favoured beyond expression, if this small work should convey to others the same persuasion, and thus advance christian conciliation and co-operative beneficence.

It will be easy for an objector to complain of omissions, and to mention able defences of Episcopacy and Independency of which I have not taken any notice. My answer is, that I could not undertake to answer all such writings, however deserving they may be of consideration; and that no one will accuse me of a deficiency of courage in my selection of opponents, if, under any aspect, I may apply that name to my distinguished and venerable friend Dr Wardlaw.

It will not be supposed that in bringing out another vindication of Presbyterianism with special adaptation to the present day, I undervalue prior publications in behalf of the same cause. I freely acknowledge my obligations to them, and I have doubtless derived from them more benefit than I am now able to trace to its sources. Not to speak of older works, much valuable service has been rendered, of late years, to the Ecclesiastical Polity of which I approve, by such men as Drs Miller, Smyth, and Barnes, in America, and by Drs Brown, Mitchell, Lorimer, and M'Kerrow, in this country. The strictures on Dr Wardlaw's defence of Independency, by the last-named writer, which appeared in successive numbers of the *United Presbyterian Magazine*, will amply reward careful perusal.

In preparing this volume, I have found brethren of different denominations so ready to afford me all facilities in the prosecution of my undertaking, that I cannot here specify their acts of helpful kindness. I must not, however, fail to acknowledge the valuable aid afforded me by my learned, judicious, and highly-esteemed friend, Professor LINDSAY, who revised the whole work as it was

passing through the press, and in different instances suggested amendments of material consequence.

As the general line of argument which I have here followed has engaged my thoughts through a course of years, I do not feel entitled to make any apology for it, or to ask for it any forbearance. But my plan has been worked out amid numerous and distracting engagements; and therefore I fully anticipate that flaws will be detected in the details of execution. As to the main principles I have no misgivings; and I invite a thorough scrutiny of them, in the conviction that they are scriptural, and that the more they are examined, they will the more appear worthy of Him who is not the author of confusion, but of order, as in all churches of the saints.

DAVID KING.

GLASGOW, 10*th March*, 1853.

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# PART I.

## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

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I. ANY form of church government is satisfactorily defended only in so far as its essential constituents are proved to be in accordance with scripture. It is true that we are not furnished, under the dispensation of the Spirit, with any such formal pattern of ecclesiastical polity as was shown to Moses in the mount. The hints and examples which the New Testament affords for our guidance in this department, often indicate rather than delineate duty, and leave room for the exercise of christian expediency in executing our in-

structions. But without alleging that a divine hand has here discriminated for us the legitimate and the forbidden grounds by completed fences, having every post and stake precisely adjusted, we may yet look for those landmarks which shall betoken the general divisions of the country—which shall assist without superseding minuter measurements and partitionings —and which have only to be known and respected to secure the invaluable blessings of a kind and righteous administration.

These observations disparage in no degree the healthful exercise of judgment: let a sound mind do all it can accomplish. Reason and revelation have one Author; and where in any case they furnish direction on the same subject, they are mutually illustrative and confirmatory of one another. But, though we may take advantage of the light of nature so often as it shines with appreciable distinctness, yet if we had no other guidance in our examination of ecclesiastical polities, I see not that we could reach any clear and well-established conclusions regarding their merits. In all reasoning, we must have some data. It is impossible to argue from expediency itself without laying down common principles. But the principles of expediency—what are they, and where to be found? Whether sought in the human constitution, or the social compact, or the pages of history, they are so hard to be ascertained and settled, and our estimate of them is so exceedingly affected by our position, education, and interests, that we could hardly determine, by merely prudential con-

siderations, what we were to take for granted; and for want of premises, we should be precluded from drawing deductions.

No doubt important treatises have been written on the comparative advantages of different forms of civil government. But even the best of those works evince a frequent perplexity in the absence of authoritative and indisputable postulates. And were the relations and duties of temporal citizenship ever so lucidly expounded, and unerringly demonstrated, there is so much of peculiarity in the nature and obligations of ecclesiastical confederation, that just notions of political fitness might only mislead us, if we applied them without modification, and without exception to the government of Christ's house. Therefore we must have some other and better ground than expediency to stand upon in deciding between rival schemes of church order, and our determining query must be—What saith the scripture?

This preliminary question, as to how far proof may be here expected and sought from the word of God, is important, essentially affecting the validity of all our subsequent reasoning, and, at the risk of being tedious, I solicit for it deliberate consideration. That Christ should assign his church no form of government, is, I submit, a position highly improbable in itself. The church must have some constitution; and on many grounds it appears of great and manifest importance that he should be its Legislator.

(1.) He is the Prince of Peace, and he promised peace to his people. But how could the societies of

his worshippers be peacefully organised if the mode of organisation were optional, and left to be determined by their own fallible and conflicting judgments? Under such conditions, discord would be inevitable. It is true that strifes about church government have actually arisen, and that no extent of privilege secures an imperfect discipleship against their occurrence. But the conflicts which result from the *neglect* of a standard are always more or less restrained, even while they last, by that standard; and they admit of eventual and satisfactory settlement. Whereas differences accruing from *want* of a standard have no moderating element, and furnish no means either of prevention or of cure. Therefore they must yield unavoidable and interminable troubles.

(2.) It was of high importance that Christ should legislate for his church in order to secure for it a constitution worthy of his wisdom. We have seen that the peace of the church requires that its King and Head should furnish its constitution. This consideration holds good irrespectively of the merits of different forms of government. Although they were equally eligible in themselves, it would still be of immense consequence for the peace of the church to have a preference of one above another appointed and enjoined. But different systems of ecclesiastical administration have no such parity of excellence. Few things, not identical in kind, have the same value in themselves, or fitness for a specific end. That diverse forms of rule should form an exception, and should so approximate in worth as to make the choice between

them a matter of indifference, is inconceivable; for nowhere is a happy medium more liable to be missed than in the modelling of superintendence; and nowhere does human nature show a stronger proneness to incline to one or other of opposite extremes. In so far as good government is secured, it is inexpressibly valuable in itself. It treats the governed as citizens, and not as serfs; it allows the greatest freedom consistent with order; it establishes presidency without oppression, and liberty without licentiousness.

(3.) That Christ should legislate for his church will appear highly important if we look to practical results. Under this aspect, government is of moment, if anything be of moment in the christian church, inasmuch as all interests are affected by its influence. According as rule is good or bad, truth will be maintained or betrayed, and the administration of scriptural discipline will be enforced or relaxed. Principal Campbell, though he is very moderate, not to say latitudinarian in his views, as to the divine appointment of any form of church government, yet acknowledges that 'a certain external model of government must have been originally adopted for the more effectual preservation of the evangelical institution in its native purity, and for the careful transmission of it to after ages; and that a presumptuous encroachment on what is evidently so instituted is justly reprehensible.' Elsewhere he says: 'Certain it is that one model of church government may be much better calculated for promoting belief and obedience than another. Nay, it is not impossible that such changes may be introduced as are much

more fitted for obstructing the influence of true religion than for advancing it; nay, for inspiring a contrary temper, and nourishing the most dangerous vices.'* The influence of government is thus most extensive, not to say all-comprehensive, for good or evil; and if we could trace all the impression it has made on doctrinal belief and ecclesiastical supervision and practical piety, there would be no longer any pretext for classing the subject here to be discussed with the idle questions which minister strife rather than godly edifying.

II. But in all this line of remark, we are reasoning, it may be said, from mere probability—stating what we might expect, and not what we actually find. To come to facts, then, ascertained and undoubted facts—we know that the primitive church had a constitution. Who can deny that its affairs were regulated in a definite and orderly manner? 'For God,' says the apostle of the Gentiles, 'is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.'† If, then, a certain order was instituted in the primitive church, by which confusion was excluded, why should not this 'church order' be retained? Although the apostles had said nothing about retaining it, yet as they set it up, and acted on it themselves, should we not recognise, in their example, an imperative precept? 'Those

* On Ecclesiastical History. Lect. iv. and Lect. viii.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

things,' says one of their number, 'which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you.'* It may be objected, that a retention of the primitive system is impracticable—that it was adapted for its own day, and no other; and now, when it is gone, admits not of being recalled. But let this ground be considered before it is occupied. What does it suppose? That Christ appointed a government for his church which could not be perpetuated—that he nurtured habits and attachments in favour of a certain system, to be ruptured almost as soon as formed! It supposes that the church had a constitution by which to guide itself under the apostles, and was then cast on a sea of change, just when apostolic pilotage was withdrawn! It is surely more credible that the apostles set in operation a plan which the churches would do well, after their decease, to have always in remembrance.

Still it may be objected that much of the apostolic administration was manifestly extraordinary, and therefore cannot be upheld in ordinary times. The reply is obvious, that what was manifestly extraordinary can give us no perplexity, as on that very account it is manifestly not binding. The apostolic office, as I shall afterwards endeavour to show, was itself of this character. The same doctrine will be established as to the evangelists, who performed like work as the apostles, under their direction; and no

* Phil. iv. 9.

demonstration is needed that miracles, and gifts of healing, and diversities of tongues, belonged exclusively to the age of supernatural endowments.

If, then, all the offices in the primitive church had borne the impress of this uncommon and transient character, there would have been no ground for pleading their permanency. But if some were different in their nature—if some had duties attached to them which may still be performed, and qualifications required for them which may still be possessed—if these were instituted universally in the primitive churches; and if the discharge of their functions would secure, at all times, the maintenance and extension of the Redeemer's kingdom—then, are we not equally bound to hold such offices inviolate, as if they alone had subsisted from the beginning? If ever they could have been readily dispensed with, it was surely in the apostolic age, when inspiration and miracles might have accomplished their objects; and why should they, even at that time, have been assigned to the churches, if not to mark the more emphatically their indispensable and ever-enduring character?

Thus far the case has been stated hypothetically, that the nature of the argument might be better apprehended. But I now state positively, that there were such divinely-appointed offices; and that we have no right whatever to abolish or alter them. Whenever a number of persons were converted under the preaching of the apostles or their fellow-labourers, these converts were formed into a society, and obtained for their stated and proper officers, bishops

and deacons. Only some churches were favoured with the ministrations of apostles and evangelists, and these churches enjoyed that distinction only for limited periods, and at remote intervals; but every church, no matter when planted, or by whom watered, or to what country belonging—had bishops and deacons for its fixed and abiding office-bearers. The epistle to the Philippians is addressed to 'all saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:' no mention is made of other office-bearers. In the first epistle to Timothy, Paul gives directions about the necessary qualifications of the same office-bearers, and he speaks of no others. The Rev. Herbert Thorndike, a learned divine of the Church of England, who flourished in the reign of Charles I., says of the apostle Paul, that 'neither in the relation of his planting and ordering the churches, nor in the style of his epistles, nor in his instructions concerning ministers of these churches, is there any remembrance or respect to be found but of presbyters [identified in scripture with bishops] and deacons.'*

Here, then, is a great and palpable fact: the primitive churches had stated functionaries, readily dis-

* Government of Churches. Cambridge, 1641.—The words presbyter and bishop denote the same class in scripture. In modern works they are sometimes called 'presbyter-bishops' to distinguish them from the 'diocesan bishops' of our existing episcopal churches. The word elder is a translation of presbyter. Let the reader then keep in mind that *bishop*, *presbyter*, *elder*, are three expressions for one class of office-bearers. The truth of this statement will be made apparent afterwards.

tinguishable from extraordinary office-bearers wielding a preternatural and temporary sway. To this extent we can, and therefore should be followers of them who were the immediate followers of Christ. We cannot have apostles. But we may have presbyters—we may have deacons; and we act dutifully in seeking the closest attainable assimilation to the churches of the apostolic age. 'All christians,' says an eloquent writer, 'are under a solemn obligation to follow the ascertained universal practice of the primitive churches, founded and regulated by Christ's commissioned servants, the apostles. Paul manifests much solicitude upon the subject, and most solemnly enjoins upon the churches adherence to all his injunctions.* Nor is he sparing of approbation where obedience has been implicit: "I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and *keep the ordinances* as I delivered them to you."† Nor is he less prompt in his reprobation of novelties and innovations: "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."‡ The doctrine of these scriptures unquestionably is, that one general practice prevailed at the beginning, and that churches were not permitted to deviate from that practice.'§

If any particular rite or agency were mentioned in connexion with only one church, or a few churches, we might suppose that it originated in peculiar cir-

* 2 Thess. ii. 15. † 1 Cor. xi. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 16.
§ Campbell's Church Fellowship, p. 12.

cumstances, and had no claims on adoption beyond the bounds of a local propriety. On this ground, Dr Wardlaw maintains that we are justifiable in dispensing with deaconesses. 'There were no deaconesses,' he says, 'in the first church—the model church, that of Jerusalem. Although the class of persons of whom the neglect complained of occasioned the institution of the office was a description of females, those appointed there to hold it were men—seven men of honest report. The evidence of the existence of deaconesses afterwards, in any of the other churches, is so exceedingly scanty as to make it matter of surprise that it should have been so generally assumed. There is one passage only, and that a merely incidental one, that at all bears upon it, and that passage is Rom. xvi. 1. . . . If in any case females were installed in office, it was where the customs of society did not admit of such easy freedom of intercourse between the sexes, as existed among the Hebrews, and exists among ourselves.'*

The same writer offers proof, in another part of his work, that like observations are applicable to a community of goods—to the kiss of charity—to the washing of the disciples' feet, and to love feasts. All these usages, he contends, have been magnified beyond their reality, and were, besides, limited to particular spots, or districts, and cannot be justly said to have prevailed in the primitive churches.

But a different character attaches to any constituent

* Cong. Indep., pp. 146, 147.

of primitive order which can be shown to have belonged to the churches generally. Of these churches, some were in towns, others in the country; some in barbarous regions, others in states highly civilised. The churches of different localities presented, in fact, as much diversity of external condition as can well pertain to churches of different ages. In vain, then, should we argue that *we may institute other rights and ceremonies under other circumstances*, since *the plea of dissimilar circumstances existed from the first, and was overruled by apostolic authority.* An argument from convenience, which would discharge us from the permanent retention of an ordinance, would have discharged the primitive churches from its universal adoption. And when we omit all consideration of miraculous functions and endowments, as neither recoverable nor imitable, we are safe in laying down this rule—That *we should adopt every associating and assimilating feature of identity in the primitive churches, which they allowed no casualties, and no vicissitudes to molest; and should be careful to hold that in common with them which they held in common with one another.*

# PART II.

## ON DEACONS.

### CHAPTER I.

*That the primitive churches had deacons, universally admitted—Proofs of the existence of this order in the apostolic age—The special nature of their office disputed—Paul's Epistles do not indicate their peculiar functions—The seven spoken of in Acts chap.* vi. *are not called deacons—That the seven, however, were deacons, and that their charge shows the character of the deacon's work, may be inferred from the manner of their appointment; from the language used respecting them; from the qualifications required of deacons; and from historical testimony.*

It is universally admitted that the primitive churches had a class of office-bearers called Deacons. Explicit mention is made of them in the epistles of Paul, and in the writings of the early christian fathers. The epistle to the Philippians commences thus: 'Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' From these words we naturally infer that the deacons were a stated order of functionaries, equally as the bishops, with whom they are here associated and addressed. After describing, in the first epistle to Timothy, the qualifications needful in a bishop, Paul says: 'Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the

faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.'* It will be observed that the apostle does not in these verses speak problematically of the existence of deacons. He does not say that if they are appointed, or where they are appointed, they should have the endowments and character which he describes. He takes for granted their appointment as equally indispensable and undoubted with that of bishops, of whom he had spoken previously. The last verse of the passage above cited, 'They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus,' is evidently a comprehensive proposition applicable to churches generally, and not to any one church exclusively. Deacons are not alluded to expressly under that title in any other part of the New Testament. But these passages are clear in their import; and they leave no room for reasonable doubt that the institution of deacons both existed and prevailed in the primitive churches. If we pass from inspired to uninspired writings, we find ecclesiastical history abounding in evidence to the same effect.

* 1 Tim. iii. 8–13.

But what was the special work of the deacons? Here opinion becomes divided. The passages which have been quoted from the epistles of Paul teach us that churches should have deacons, and that deacons should be men of high christian character. But they do not inform us what specific duties the deacons are to perform. Can we not learn their distinctive employment elsewhere? It has been generally supposed that light is thrown on this subject by the following verses: 'And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.'* The Hebrews mentioned in the first verse were Jews, who spoke the Hebrew language, while the Grecians were mostly foreign Jews, or

* Acts vi. 1–6.

proselytes, who had come from countries where the Greek language was in more general use. A misunderstanding had arisen between these sections of Israel, in consequence of the foreign Jews imagining, with or without reason, that their poor widows were not equally provided for as those of their Hebrew brethren. The apostles declared that they could not, consistently with a faithful discharge of other duties, conduct this business, when it had become so involved in misapprehension and strife (whether they had done so before or not), and therefore they gave directions for the election of persons, having suitable qualifications and character, to whom it should be given in charge. So far the meaning of the passage is obvious. But the question now arises whether the seven of whom it speaks were deacons.

'The seven,' says Archbishop Whately, 'are nowhere in scripture designated by this title [of deacons.] They are referred to, in Acts xxi. 8, not as the "seven deacons," but simply as *the seven.* And the primary and especial office for which they were appointed—that of stewards and almoners—is not referred to at all in what Paul says of the office of a deacon. Hence, some have inferred that the seven persons mentioned in Acts were appointed to a temporary office for a temporary and local emergency.'* Several writers have lately advocated the view which Archbishop Whately here notices, and have contended with much ingenuity, that the seven were not deacons; and that

* Kingdom of Christ, page 124. Note.

their appointment, consequently, gives us no insight into the deacon's duties. On this hypothesis, the deacons mentioned by Paul may have been spiritual officers, and had no such pecuniary trust as the seven were elected and ordained to discharge.

I shall state as briefly as possible my reasons for believing, after a careful examination of the proof offered to the contrary, that the seven were deacons; and that the serving of tables is the proper work of the deaconship.

1st. The supposition adverted to by Archbishop Whately, of the seven having been appointed to a temporary office, for a temporary and local emergency, does not appear very accordant with the mode of their appointment. The choice and ordination of them were conducted with a solemnity, and have been recorded with a particularity, not adequately accounted for by transient adjustments, but which appear perfectly reasonable, if we recognise in the transactions the origination of a general and abiding institution.

2d. The language used by Luke, in speaking of the seven, favours the belief that they were deacons. He does not indeed expressly call them by that name, but he represents them as appointed (*διακονεῖν*) to *deaconise* in respect to tables—if I may coin a word for the sake of literal translation; and when we afterwards read of deacons in the epistles of Paul, we are led by the use of the cognate terms to think of the same class of functionaries and the same species of ministration. This is not a conclusive argument on the question

at issue, but it creates a presumption in favour of the view which I defend.

This presumption is the stronger, when the verb (*διακονέω, diaconeo*) used in relation to the seven, is observed to have respect very generally to pecuniary trust or allied service. It occurs thirty-three times in the New Testament; and I find that in two-thirds of the whole, its application to such occupation as may be fitly called a serving of tables, is evident and unquestionable; while, in some of the remaining examples, it also admits, without demanding, this interpretation. Does not this use of the verb so general, and so marked, dispose us to find a like meaning in the cognate substantive officially appropriated?

We are reminded, however, that Paul speaks of going to Jerusalem to act as a deacon to the saints; that he tells us of his deaconship for Jerusalem; that the Hebrews, in the epistle addressed to them, are commended indiscriminately, in that they had acted, and did act, as deacons unto the saints.*

These, and such passages, prove, I acknowledge, that the verb used by Luke in the Acts, and the cognate substantive employed by Paul in his epistles, do not, by their sameness of etymology, unquestionably identify the seven, and deacons. But these citations, so far from annulling, strengthen the presumption, for which alone I plead, in behalf of that conclusion. When Paul speaks of himself and others *deaconising*, in respect to the relief of the distressed, it is by no means evi-

* See Rom. xv. 25, 31; Heb. vi. 10.

dent, because he and his companions were not, strictly speaking, deacons, that he has no allusion to the deacon's office. It is more natural to understand that the deacon's office and its eleemosynary functions are presupposed in such language. This point may be illustrated by analogous phraseology. Saints are said to reign, and to offer sacrifices, though they have not actually regal or sacerdotal functions. Still, in such language, there is a reference to office, and to its characteristic engagements. There is allusion to the offices of kings and priests; and believers are declared to be these functionaries, under certain aspects, and in relation to certain engagements. So they who are said to deaconise, though not necessarily averred to be literally deacons, may be thus exhibited as exemplifying the deacon in relation to the matters spoken of. If Paul had been said to go to Jerusalem διακονῶν, doing the deacon's work, and we had known nothing of the object of his visit, we might have supposed that the language was descriptive simply of apostolic or spiritual labours. But he went bearing a collection for the poor saints; and when in fulfilling this service he executed the deacon's functions, is not the inference strong that the business of deacons was to do what he did? He acted the deacon—how? By conveying alms to the poor.

But the presumption, it may be said, that Luke, in the sixth chapter of the Acts, uses the verb, instead of the substantive, cannot be very strong, unless we find the same substitution made on other occasions. That is what we do find, and find, too, oftener than once.

The verb is twice employed in the first epistle to Timothy, as I suppose it to be in the Acts, in lieu of the substantive. When Paul says, 'Let them use the office of a deacon;'* and again, 'They that have used the office of a deacon well,'† he employs the identical words which occur in the phrase—'it is not meet that we serve tables'‡—that we use the office of deacon in respect to tables. Surely, then, we are not rash in believing, till contrary evidence is furnished, that the common meaning of the verb διακονέω, diaconeo, has entered into the official designation, διακονος, diaconos, deacon; and that the verb is actually used for the substantive in the 6th chapter of the Acts, as we find it to be unquestionably a first and a second time in the first epistle to Timothy.

3d. Though Paul gives us no statement of the duties of deacons, he specifies, in the first epistle to Timothy, the qualifications which they needed; and among these qualifications there is none that has particular relation either to teaching or ruling, and none that would not be of manifest value to ecclesiastical almoners. It is true that the deacon is required to be a man 'holding the mystery of the faith in a pure

* 1 Tim. iii. 10. † Ver. 13.

‡ Let the reader compare these passages:—Acts vi. 2. Οὐκ ἀρεστόν ἐστιν ἡμᾶς . . . διακονεῖν τραπέζαις. 1 Tim. iii. 10. Καὶ οὗτοι δὲ δοκιμαζέσθωσαν πρῶτον, εἶτα διακονείτωσαν. And 13—οἱ γὰρ καλῶς διακονήσαντες βαθμὸν ἑαυτοῖς καλὸν περιποιοῦνται.

conscience.'* If we understand these words to mean that he should be conscientiously orthodox, still there is no necessary connexion between orthodoxy and public instruction or government. A deacon dispensing the bounty of the church could not fail to be a person of influence, and also to come much into communication with fellow-worshippers; and it was greatly to be deprecated that such a functionary should be of erroneous or questionable opinions, when he could so easily pervert the power inseparable from his station to the disparagement of truth, or the propagation of heresies. An appointment of this description was the more to be dreaded, when, as all great authorities on christian antiquities acknowledge, the members of the churches exercised so much liberty in exhorting one another.

4th. That the seven mentioned in the Acts were deacons, appears from historical testimony. An appeal must here be made to the Fathers. That many objectionable notions are to be found in their writings, I readily allow. But even if we attach no weight whatever to their speculative opinions, we may give some consideration to their higher and fuller knowledge regarding a matter of fact. It is essentially a matter of fact we are now seeking to determine, viz., whether the appointment of the seven originated the order of deacons. The Fathers may give us, and do give us, strange views about the duties of the deaconship, as about other things. But if they help us in

* 1 Tim. iii. 9.

determining the fact that the seven were deacons, we shall go to scripture itself to learn their obligations.

Coleman says: 'It is particularly important to remark that the word διακονέω [diaconeo] has in many passages reference to an office in the church instituted by the apostles; and that the appellation of διακονος, deacon, denotes one whose duty it is to receive the charities of the church, and to distribute their alms. . . . An explicit account of the first appointment of a deacon in the church at Jerusalem is given in Acts vi. 1–7. . . . It was their duty to receive and disburse the charities of the church. In the discharge of these duties they were styled the mouth, and the heart, or soul of the bishop. In this sense they were accounted the indispensable assistants of the bishop, without whom he could do nothing. Their duties increased with the possessions of the church, so that they acted essentially as the accountants and clerks of the bishop.'*

Here Coleman, speaking in the name of history, alleges that the seven mentioned in the Acts were deacons in the official sense of the term, and that the deacons spoken of in the Epistles were a continuation of the same order. Nor does he contradict himself when he says that the most ancient authorities afford the fullest evidence that these men, being almoners, were yet 'strictly ministers who acted as assistants to the bishops and presbyters in their religious services and other official duties.' There is here

* Antiq., chap. iii., sect. x.

no such inconsistency as has been charged against the author. Corruption, on the side of usurpation, early appeared in the church. Every functionary arrogated to himself more power and consequence than belonged of right to his office. The earliest historical intimations show that deacons were just as grasping as others. But it is quite possible for the same authorities to say that the seven were deacons appointed as such to take charge of tables; and that from a very remote period deacons, while retaining table service, did many things beyond what the seven were appointed to perform. When, however, we have got the testimony of history to the fact, that the seven were the first deacons, we can then, with the scriptures in our hand, judge of the propriety of the many items speedily comprised in their stewardship.

In the clear understanding that the seven were deacons, some of the early churches adhered to the precise number seven in their diaconal staff, aiming at a perfect conformity to apostolic example, and rigid fulfilment of a divine appointment. The learned Bingham says indeed that 'the number of deacons usually increased with the necessities of the church, and the Church of Rome was singular in the contrary practice.'* But the word 'singular' is not there to be taken absolutely; for Bingham says in the same paragraph that '*in some churches* they were very precise to the number seven, in imitation of the first church of Jerusalem. The Council of Neocæsarea

* Antiq., B. i., ch. xx., sect. 19.

enacted it into a canon that there ought to be but seven deacons in any city, though it was never so great; because this was according to the rule suggested in the Acts of the Apostles.'

Amid the multiplicity of engagements which came to be assigned to deacons, the original duty of serving tables everywhere maintained its place; and the universality of this usage strongly indicates its high antiquity and divine origin. They were employed not only in dispensing supplies from the table of the poor, but also in conveying the symbols from the table of the Lord, as if all tables, having any connexion with the church, came within their administration. 'It belonged to them,' says Bingham, 'to take care of the holy table, and all the ornaments and utensils appertaining thereto. . . . It was appropriate to them to assist the bishops or presbyters in the administration of the eucharist, where their business was to distribute the elements to the people that were present, and carry them to those that were absent also, as Justin Martyr acquaints us in his second apology.'* Since the church showed a disposition to multiply the functions of deacons, it was against the current of the times to found the validity of the office on a passage in the Acts, which gave no countenance to these many inventions; and we cannot understand why parties, introducing deacons so different from the seven, should yet have acknowledged the seven to be the model deacons, unless under the pressure of his-

* Antiq., B. i., ch. xx., sect. 4.

torical evidence, which, with better and fuller means of information than we possess, they felt to be irresistible.

Bingham, in treating of deacons, cites many passages, 'to show the sense of antiquity concerning their original.' By his quotations he seeks to prove two things; first, that the seven were deacons, and, as such, charged with the service of tables; and, secondly, that in the judgment of ancient writers, the serving of tables was not the only work of deacons. His authorities are unanimous as to the former proposition identifying the seven and deacons. He represents the Council of Trullo (held in the sixth century) as singular in denying the latter proposition—that deacons have other duties besides that of serving the poor. 'The Council of Trullo,' he says 'advances a very singular notion about this matter, asserting that the seven deacons spoken of in the Acts are not to be understood of such as ministered in divine service, or the sacred mysteries, but only of such as served tables and attended the poor.' As reported by Bingham, the Council of Trullo held that the seven were deacons—that these seven deacons only served tables and attended the poor—and that the deacons of subsequent times, without any sanction from the sixth chapter of the Acts, had other functions assigned them, and ministered in divine service or the sacred mysteries.

Bingham tell us that 'Ignatius styles them (deacons) expressly ministers of the mysteries of Christ, adding that they are not ministers of meats and drinks, but

of the church of God.'* The meaning of this assertion he justly understands to be that deacons were not ministers of meats and drinks *only*. The language implies that deacons had such an appointment as might tempt people to think that they had to do exclusively with meats and drinks. And this very special connexion of their office with meats and drinks, points clearly enough to the serving of tables; for to serve a table, and serve the meats and drinks placed on it, marks a distinction without a difference. Ignatius, then, in speaking of deacons, had in view the sixth chapter of the Acts, as in part, at least, explanatory of their functions.

'Cyprian speaks of them,' says Bingham, 'in the same style, calling them ministers of episcopacy and the church, withal referring their original to the place in the Acts of the Apostles, which the Council of Trullo disputes about.' The author does not give us the words of Cyprian, but he refers us at the foot of the page to the 68th epistle of that Father, and in that epistle this passage is to be found: 'We perceive that the apostles observed this public appointment, not only in the ordination of bishops and priests, but also of deacons, regarding which also *it is written in their Acts:* "And the twelve called together the whole mul-

* The learned author does not give the words of the original, which are these:— Δεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὺς διακονους, ὄντας μυστήριων. 1. Χϛι., κατὰ πάντα τρόπον πᾶσιν ἀρέσκειν. Οὐ γὰρ βρῶματων καὶ ποτων εἰσιν διακονοι αλλὰ ἐκκλησίας θεου ὑπηρέται.—*Epis. ad Trall. Ch.* ii.

titudes of the disciples, and said to them,"' etc.* Here the original appointment of deacons is traced to Acts vi. in the most unequivocal manner. Jerome, we are informed by Bingham, 'sometimes in an angry humour, speaks a little contemptuously of them, [deacons] styling them ministers of widows and tables.' It is manifest that Jerome, in so characterising deacons, refers to their original appointment, as recorded in the sixth chapter of the Acts, the very language of which he quotes.

'The Apostolic Constitutions,' as quoted by Bingham, 'represent the bishop, when ordaining a deacon, as praying that God would make his face to shine upon that his servant, who was then chosen to the office of deacon, and fill him with his Holy Spirit and power, as he did Stephen the Martyr.' The aptness of this allusion to Stephen, in the ordination of deacons, wholly depends on the supposition that he was a deacon, and endowed as such with the power and Spirit now asked for other deacons.

Dr Miller, in his work on the Eldership, produces other quotations from christian Fathers not less decisive of the point at issue—that in the judgment of christian antiquity the seven mentioned by Luke were deacons equally as those to whom Paul expressly assigns that designation. The proof might be inde-

* The words of the original are:—'Coram omni synagoga jubet Deus Constitui sacerdotem id est, etc. . . . Nec hoc in episcoporum tantum et sacerdotum sed et in Diaconorum ordinationibus observasse apostolos animadvertimus de quo et ipso in *Actis eorum scriptum est*, "et convocarunt illi duodecim totam plebem discipulorum et dixerunt iis,"' etc.

finitely enlarged. I do not observe in either of these writers, or remember to have seen elsewhere, the following passage of Cyril. In his Lectures, as published at Oxford, 1839, he has this sentence: 'Nor in the twelve apostles only wrought the grace of the Holy Ghost, but also on the first-born children of this once barren church, I mean the seven deacons; for these also were chosen, as it is written, being full of the Holy Ghost.'*

It has been already mentioned that one object contemplated by Bingham, in his citations regarding deacons, is to prove the propriety of assigning them more duty than the mere serving of tables. If we consult scripture on the subject, it appears that the seven were expressly 'set over this matter,' and not any other. They were required, indeed, to be full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom; and some think that such language surely pointed to a higher vocation than the distribution of money. But though we should explain the phrase, 'full of the Holy Ghost,' as referring to preternatural endowments, who could say, that in an age when these were abundant, they might not be expected with special propriety in a stated order of officers? How is it certain that such a gift as the discernment of spirits might not be peculiarly called for at times to sift the pretensions of claimants for relief or the spurious generosity of some Ananias or Sapphira? Preternatural endowments, then, might be very valuable to the custodiers of the church's funds

* Page 233.

and the dispensers of its charities. The probability, however, is, whether the seven were preternaturally endowed or not, that no allusion is made to such qualifications in the phraseology we are considering. Neander tells us that the word *Holy* appears to be a gloss; and that the word Spirit, which is 'the true reading, denotes that inspiration for the cause of the gospel, which is requisite for every kind of exertion for the kingdom of God.' *

Other attempts to get additional work for deacons in the scriptures are not more successful. Stephen spoke in his own defence; and who may not when he is unjustly accused? Philip preached. We do not, however, require to suppose that he did so as a deacon, when we are informed that he was an 'evangelist.' But the amount of a deacon's duties is not the main point now treated of. We have been adducing the testimony of the Fathers specifically to the fact that the seven appointed to serve tables were deacons, though in the sixth chapter of the Acts they are not expressly so called.

The concurrent understanding of the church, in the times of Ignatius, Cyprian, the author of the Constitutions, Jerome, Cyril, the Council of Neocæsarea, etc., undoubtedly was, that the seven mentioned by Luke were deacons, and were of the same order with the deacons mentioned by Paul. There is no testimony that can be called opposing. The prevalent belief does not appear to have elicited any protest, or

* Hist. of the Planting, etc., vol. i. p. 39.

to have occasioned any controversy. In fact, it is a novelty of modern times to dispute whether the seven were deacons. And still the position is disputed by few. 'The current opinion,' says Dr Miller, 'of all the most learned and judicious christian divines of all denominations, for several centuries past, is decisively in favour of considering the passage in Acts vi. as recording the first appointment of the New Testament deacons. Among all classes of theologians, Catholic and Protestant, Lutheran and Calvinistic, Presbyterian and Episcopal, this concurrence of opinion approaches so near to unanimity, that we may, without injustice to any other opinion, consider it as the deliberate and harmonious judgment of the christian church.'*

In these views Neander concurs. He says, in one of his works, 'It would be wrong to deny that the later church office of this name developed itself from the first, and might be traced back to it. Although, as is usual in such affairs, when the ecclesiastical system became more complex, many changes took place in the office of deacons; for example, the original sole appointment of deacons for the distribution of alms, became afterwards subordinate to the influence of the presbyters, who assumed the whole management of church affairs,† and though many other secular

* On the Ruling Elder, chap. x.

† On the subordination of deacons to presbyters in the reception and disbursement of funds, Neander says, 'From Acts xi. 30, nothing more is to be inferred, than that when presbyters were appointed for the general superintendence of the church, the

employments were added to the original one, yet the fundamental principle, [the relief of the poor] as well as the name of the office, remained. In later times we still find traces of the distribution of alms being considered as the peculiar employment of deacons.' * A full view, then, of the scriptural records, of ancient notices, and of monumental usages, will probably secure in time coming, as in times past, very common assent to the conclusion, that the seven were deacons, and that their appointment to serve tables instructs us in the nature of the deacon's duties.

## CHAPTER II.

*The deaconship of the seven derives confirmation from the consequences of controverting this position.*

DISINCLINED to protract discussion on a subject which to some readers may have no special interest, I shall reserve the consideration of some objections to the views which have been advanced, for a note at the close of this volume, and shall here only glance at the consequences of controverting the position that the seven were deacons.

contributions intended for the church were handed over to them, as formerly to the apostles, when they held the exclusive management of affairs. It may be fairly supposed that the presbyters entrusted each of the deacons with a sum out of the common fund for distribution in his own department.'

* Hist. of the Planting, etc., pp. 39, 40.

On this supposition we have, as the epistle to the Philippians and the first epistle to Timothy show, a stated order of functionaries in the primitive church, which is our model; but, without Acts vi., no index to their characteristic employments. And when we shall have appointed deacons, in due regard to the apostolic pattern, we are left wholly uninformed what these office-bearers are to do! There is, I confess, no formal statement of the duties of elders; but then we have unequivocal intimations about their teaching and ruling. For deacons we have, when the seven are denied to have been such, nothing of the kind—no hint whatever as to their functions. To no purpose is it here said that with the mode of instruction we have no right to quarrel; and that God may reveal his will as it pleases him, by words or facts, systematically or incidentally. This is true; but to insist on this truth is nothing to the present purpose. If the seven were not deacons, and the serving of tables be not the deacon's work, then *every* avenue to knowledge is here shut—the oracles of God are absolutely dumb; and I submit that a divine warrant for an office, without divine announcement of any kind about its engagements, is a case without an explanation and without a parallel.

Suppose that we take tradition for our rule, where we have no better directory, and elect deacons to be 'adjutants to bishops,' what adjutantship is to be given? How are superintendence and subordination to be meted out between the helping and the helped; and where, in churches having elders, shall we find other

men to take the duties of elders subordinately, while denied the office itself with its encouragements and honours ?

It may be said that our presbyterian churches have in effect such adjutants now, and that we may recognise them in missionary collectors, Sabbath-school teachers, etc., etc. But these undefined, multiform, and ever-changing agencies, cannot for a moment be mistaken for an order of deacons, equally specific as an order of elders, and jointly mentioned with them in the epistles of Paul. Under the vague title of adjutants to bishops, we may institute almost any order of functionaries, and give them almost any powers we please, and wander ever so widely from apostolic precedents, till the traditionary lamp prove no better than the meteoric light arising from swamps, and seducing us into their mire. I prefer the persuasion that the seven were deacons, as furnishing a solution of the main difficulties—a solution which is reasonable in itself, accordant with scripture, confirmed by history, and happily exempted from these distressing consequences.

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## CHAPTER III.

*The scriptural model of Deacons has not been closely adhered to by Episcopalians, Independents, or Presbyterians.*

If we bring the principles which have been stated and defended in the foregoing pages to bear on

existing facts, we do not find much adherence, in this province, to the primitive model. It is the doctrine of episcopacy that there are three orders of clergy, bishops, presbyters, and deacons—the last named being the lowest. Certainly, the sixth chapter of the Acts would never suggest this spiritual office as appropriate for deacons, or give us at all the idea that they are to be accounted ministers of the word. When they are constituted clergymen of the third degree, they must be invested with distinctive clerical duties, about which scripture gives no direction. They are allowed in England to baptise, to read in the church, and to assist at the celebration of the eucharist. They are not eligible to ecclesiastical promotion, but they may be chaplains to families, curates to beneficed clergymen, or lecturers to parish churches. The serving of tables, or oversight of the poor, is no longer in their hands, but has been transferred to church-wardens, annually elected in each parish by the Vestry. The power which can so far fashion ecclesiastical office may consistently introduce other modifications: and the Church of England, besides deacons, has archdeacons, and subdeacons. The archdeacon ranks next to the bishop; sways a kind of episcopal authority, once derived from the bishop, but now distinct and independent; holds his court, and punishes offences. But though archdeacons were originally of the order of deacons, the functionaries so called are in these days chosen from the order of presbyters; so that they have the title of one order, and the office of another. What the status of a subdeacon is in these

days, I do not precisely know. In times more ancient they were a sort of ecclesiastical porters and door-keepers, and by the Council of Laodicea were forbidden to sit in the presence of a deacon without his leave. In the Roman Catholic Church the duties of a deacon are very complex. He perfumes with incense the officiating clergyman and the choir; lays the corporal on the altar; transfers the patten, or cup, from the subdeacon to the officiating prelate; and the pix from the officiating prelate to the subdeacon—and many such like things he does. Such ceremonies appear to us very idle; but where is the principle that will condemn them and justify the triple clerical deaconship of Anglican episcopacy?

Independent churches have deacons. But their occupation is not limited to the serving of tables. 'Among Congregationalists,' says Dr Henderson, 'the deacons, besides attending to the temporal concerns of the church, assist the minister with their advice; take the lead at prayer-meetings when he is absent; and preach occasionally to smaller congregations in the contiguous villages.'* 'It is true,' says Mr James, 'that by the usages of our churches, many things have been added to the duties of the office [of deacon] beyond its original design; but this is mere matter of expediency.'† 'A multitude of duties,' says Dr Campbell, 'connected with the worship and the house of God, have been attached to the office as a

* See Buck's Dictionary, by Dr Henderson. Art. Deacons.

† Christian Fellowship, p. 130.

matter of convenience and utility. This scheme is without any express scripture authority; and we think that the scriptures permit, if they do not require, an arrangement somewhat different.' *

Such Independent deacons are in effect Presbyterian elders; under all the disadvantages, however, of performing duties to which they have not been appointed, while they are in danger of omitting much of the elder's work when it has not been expressly given them in charge, and of carrying undefined and usurped power to despotic excesses. This condition of the deaconship too easily explains those abuses of the office which Mr James, Dr Campbell, and other Independent writers impressively deplore.

I am not here in a condition to justify the general usage of presbyterian churches; and I will not attempt to underestimate or excuse what seems to me their common departure from apostolic precedent.

The Free Church of Scotland deserves honourable mention for reviving this institution in a scriptural form within its pale. In some points its system of deaconship may admit of amendment, and special care may be needed that 'deacons' courts' do not exceed their legitimate functions, and create troubles. But the plan in its great features exhibits an honest and praiseworthy effort to set up a christian office as it was at the beginning; and I am assured that with few exceptions the measure is working peacefully and beneficially.

* Church Fellowship, p. 60.

In former times the Scottish Establishment had also this class of office-bearers. Their office is characterised in the Second Book of Discipline as 'an ordinary and perpetual function in the kirk of Christ;' and they are retained in some of its churches. The United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, of which I have the happiness of being a minister, permits the appointment of them when they are approved of; but it has not embodied in its constitution the principle that the deacon (charged with the serving of tables) is a divinely instituted office; and the number of its churches provided with such office-bearers is comparatively small. In most presbyterian denominations throughout Great Britain, Ireland, and America, such deacons are generally dispensed with; and the charge of ecclesiastical funds is divided between elders and managers, or allied agencies.

I am aware that specious statements can be made in defence of this procedure. It can be urged, that even the apostles took charge, for a time, of eleemosynary funds, and did not resign the trust till they were constrained to do so, by an exigency which exists no longer. Are not elders, then, imitating apostolic precedent, when they retain this stewardship as long as they find it manageable? If disinterested zeal were to cast as much into the church's treasury as in primitive times, or if persecution were to render as many dependent on christian bounty, then there might be need to recall the deacon's office; but why adopt, in common times, an uncommon expedient? No doubt, if the elders were burdened by monetary affairs, it would

be proper to relieve them; but the serving of the poor requires little time; and as for transactions more strictly secular, they are disposed of by managers or trustees appointed for the purpose. This, I think, is the amount of all that can be pleaded for the non-appointment of deacons in any of our congregations; and whether it be satisfactory to the reader or not, I confess that it is not convincing to myself. It has already appeared that deacons were appointed, not only at Jerusalem, in a season of emergency, but in the churches generally, for an indefinite period. And we have no warrant to explain every example of the prevailing usage, by imagined peculiarities of time and place. Nor can it be safely averred that the want of deacons has been productive of no practical evils. It is greatly to be feared that many elders, from having a charge of the poor, think they have done enough when they have attended to this province; and that the poor also have suffered from receiving half attentions, when they had a scriptural claim to a distinct and entire guardianship. As for managers, they are a class who have rendered valuable services to our churches; but the nature of their commission is anomalous, and it would be far better if the same individuals were set apart to their functions by regular and solemn ordination. We should not then have the strange and unseemly phenomenon of secular appointments in spiritual societies. All the vessels in our sanctuary would correspond with its sacredness, and exhibit, in legible characters, the inscription, 'Holiness unto the Lord.'

'Whereas it is our duty,' says Dr Owen, 'in all things to have regard to the authority of Christ and his appointments in the gospel, if we claim the privilege of being called after his name, some think that if what he hath appointed may be colourably performed another way without respect unto his institutions, that is far the best. But omitting the practice of other men, the things that concern this office in the church, are, as we have said, clear in the scripture.

'First, The persons called unto it are to be of "honest report," furnished with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially with "wisdom," (Acts vi. 3.) And those other endowments useful in the discharge of their duty, mentioned 1 Tim. iii. 8. . . . . .

'Secondly, The way whereby they come to be made partakers of this office, is by the choice or election of the church (Acts vi. 2, 3, 5), whereupon they are solemnly to be set apart by prayer. . . . . .

'Thirdly, Their work or duty consists in a "daily ministration unto the necessities of the poor saints," or members of the church, ver. 1, 2. . . . . .

'Fourthly, To this end that they may be enabled so to do, it is ordained, that every "first day" the members of the church do contribute according as God enables them of their substance, for the supply of the wants of the poor (1 Cor. xvi. 2.) And also occasionally, as necessity shall require, or God move their hearts by his grace.

. . . . . .

'It belongs therefore unto persons called unto this office,

'First, To acquaint themselves with the outward condition of those that appear to be poor and needy in the church, whether by the addresses of such poor ones, who are bound to make known their wants, occasions, and necessities unto them, or by the information of others, or their own observation.

'Secondly, To acquaint the elders and the church, as occasion requireth, with the necessities of the poor under their care, that those who are able may be stirred up by the elders, to a free supply and contribution.

'Thirdly, To dispose what they are entrusted with faithfully, cheerfully, tenderly, "without partiality," or preferring one before another, for any outward respect whatever.

'Fourthly, To keep and give an account unto the church when called for, of what they have received, and how they have disposed of it, that so they may be known to have well discharged their office; that is, with care, wisdom, and tenderness, whereby they procure to themselves "a good degree, with boldness in the faith;" and the church is encouraged to entrust them farther with this sacrifice of their alms, which is so acceptable unto God.'*

This subject is engaging much attention at present in several presbyterian denominations, and we may hope that the renewed consideration of it will tend to the removal of doubts and difficulties, and bring about a closer agreement between the primitive pattern and modern practice.

* Worship of God by way of Question and Answer, pp. 161-167.

# PART III.

## ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH BY PRESBYTERS.

### CHAPTER I.

*The primitive churches had Presbyters or Elders—Whether above these office-bearers there was an order of prelates, to be afterwards considered—The power of Elders now viewed in relation to popular rights and Congregational principles—Acknowledgment due to Congregationalists—Dr Wardlaw's definition of Independent Polity—Independents concede that Presbyters were rulers of the primitive churches; yet assign such duties to the members of a church generally, as to annul the distinctive rule of Elders, and even bring the governors under subjection to the governed: then to qualify the unworkableness of democracy, they impose such restraints on the people as in effect to crush their freedom, and lodge in the pastorate a despotic authority.*

THE primitive churches were presided over by Presbyters or Elders. Whether the oversight assigned by scripture to these elders be such as to preclude a higher oversight by prelates, I propose to inquire in a more advanced part of this work. Now, I am to consider presbyterate authority in relation to the rights of the christian people, and more particularly to the principles of Congregationalism. That our Independent brethren have rendered an important service in so emphatically calling attention, as they have done, to the membership of the church, with its

proper obligations and privileges, I am forward to concede. The claims of the clergy have never wanted prominent exhibition. There has been often need to remind us that every member of a congregation has functions and duties, and should be encouraged, in fact, to do all the good really within his power. It is only when governing and judicial functions are claimed for all members of the church, of whatever age, sex, or attainments, that we discern in the Congregational scheme opposition to scripture, as well as inherent and insurmountable difficulty, with certain and speedy ruin to popular liberty itself.

But let our Independent brethren state their own case:

We are informed by Dr Wardlaw that the distinctive polity which he defends consists in the two particulars: 'first, that each church is entrusted with its own government; and second, that government is to be conducted not by the office-bearers alone, as its representatives, but by the office-bearers and the congregation conjointly.'* There is here involved the doctrine to which Presbyterians assent, that each church should have spiritual office-bearers; and by these office-bearers Dr Wardlaw understands, in common with ourselves, the functionaries called sometimes presbyters or elders, and sometimes bishops in the New Testament.

Beyond this degree of concord we differ; and I cannot help considering his definition as being not a

* Congreg. Indep., page 234.

little remarkable: 'Government is to be conducted by the office-bearers and the congregation conjointly.' Are the parties so conjoined in government to govern *equally* and in the *same respects?* Then what was the use of distinguishing them at all? If the office-bearers are not to have a distinct rule, why give them distinct mention?—unless it be to impart the important information, that office-bearers, for being such, are not to be denied the privileges of unofficial christians! That much, without formal announcement in a definition, we might have taken for granted. But if the special mention of office-bearers points to special powers in their hands, and intimates that the parties conjoined are, after all, not levelled or equalised, but exhibit in their conjunction difference of grade, then what is the superior power of office-bearers? what is its nature, and what are its limits? These are natural, not to say unavoidable questions; and to any one adopting Dr Wardlaw's definition, they present enough to do in the way of clearing up obscurities and obviating difficulties. I readily admit that Dr Wardlaw has applied to his task a masterly hand. I acknowledge also that, in practice, Congregational churches may often conduct their business in a very becoming manner, by committing it, in effect, to a few persons who can do it justice. There is not always the same amount of difference between christian denominations, as between treatises written for and against their respective polities. But now I have to do with books, and with Congregationalism in print; and to act fairly by my argument,

I shall be constrained to show, that while our brethren concede, in their able treatises, that elders (in the sense of teaching elders or pastors) were rulers of the primitive churches, they yet assign such duties to the members of a church collectively, as to annul the distinctive rule of elders; and then, to qualify the unworkableness of democracy, impose such restraints on the people as in effect to crush their freedom, and lodge in the pastorate a despotic authority. I will then endeavour to show that scripture does not warrant any such conjoint system of government; and finally, that it is not needful to christian liberty.

(1.) *Our Independent brethren concede that Elders (in the sense of teaching elders or pastors) were rulers of the primitive churches.* Some Independents may withhold this concession; but it is made by so many of their best writers, that I am fully warranted in assuming the position as admitted. Indeed, some of them speak of us as doing them and their system great injustice, when we charge them with a denial of authority to ministers. 'We have pastors,' says Dr Wardlaw, 'over our churches, and we regard them as having, in scripture phrase, the rule over them.'* 'The titles of *ruler* and *president*,' says Dr Davidson, 'imply that the pastors or elders of a church govern, rule, or exercise authority over it; which is farther evident, because the people are required to *obey*, to *submit* themselves to them that

* Congreg. Indep., page 311.

*have the rule.* In like manner, the flock is under the shepherd.'* 'There is *authority*,' says Mr James, 'belonging to the pastor; for office, without authority, is a solecism. "Remember them that have the rule over you," said St Paul to the Hebrews (xiii. 7.) "*Obey* them that have the rule over you;" "Submit yourselves," etc.—these are inspired injunctions, and they enjoin *obedience* and *submission* on christian churches to their pastors.'† I might multiply such citations indefinitely, but for the present let these suffice. They establish my proposition, that Congregationalists claim authority for pastors.

(2.) *Our Independent brethren assign such duties to the members of a church collectively, as annul the distinctive rule of Elders.* 'The submission enjoined,' says Dr Wardlaw, 'is submission to the presiding and directing pastor or pastors, as the divinely-authorised organ by whom, in each case, the law of Christ is to be pointed out, and with the concurrent judgment and voice of the church, to be carried into execution.'‡ Dr Wardlaw here supposes that a plurality of pastors may preside and direct. I know not well how an assembly can have more than one president; and as for direction, if the pastors differed among themselves, it would be hard for the people to know which director to follow. These are difficulties inseparable from the Congregationalist system, when we take into account that

* Eccles. Pol., page 269. † See Chris. Fellow., pp. 56, 57.
‡ Congreg. Indep., page 318.

every primitive church had, and that every christian church should still have, a plurality of elders. But these are not the points of the argument on which I desire to fix attention at present. I request consideration of 'the concurrent judgment and voice' assigned to the church, as being incompatible with the power which we have already seen to be committed to pastors. The pastor, says Dr Wardlaw, is to point out the law of Christ, and the church is to have a concurrent judgment and voice. To what does this amount? Is the minister to expound the law, and is the church bound to 'concur' in his exposition—to be guided not by scripture, but by his interpretation of scripture? The members of a jury hold themselves warranted to understand and apply the law, as explained from the bench. But our Independent brethren, in availing themselves occasionally of this forensic allusion, forget that though a juryman takes his exposition of the law from another, a judge would not do so; and that it is not the capacity of jurymen, but of judges, which they claim for all persons in christian communion. Dr Wardlaw characterises it as an extraordinary assertion, that there was no recognition of power in the Corinthian church to 'judge or to censure.'* And he declares that when Paul speaks of the people judging, 'it is not of mere assent that he speaks, but of *bona fide* judgment.'† It follows, that when the pastor shall have pointed out the law, the people are bound to

* Congreg. Indep., page 238. † Ibid, 249.

judge whether it has been pointed out correctly, and not to yield a thoughtless or passive assent to the view of it which has been offered them. 'It is their right and their duty,' says Dr Wardlaw, 'to judge his (the pastor's) doctrine, by the *instructions* of Christ; and it is equally their right and their duty to judge his administration by the *laws* of Christ.'* Dr Davidson speaks in the same strain: 'The church,' he says, 'will be slow to question the contrariety [conformity?] of his (their pastor's) proceedings to the word of God. Still, they are at perfect liberty to do so, since they have the bible in their own hands, and are commanded to think for themselves in everything relative to the church.'† The pastor, then, is to point out the law, and the people are to judge whether the law be as stated, and whether it should be applied as proposed. Suppose, farther, that a member of the church believes the law of Christ to have been incorrectly propounded, and believes that many are in danger of being misled by the error, *is he at liberty to say so?* May he rise and set forth where and on what grounds he differs from the explanation of the law given by his pastor? If not, what is meant by 'the church's voice?' They have a 'concurrent voice' with their teacher. Is the use of his voice, then, to give a view of the law against which none may whisper a doubt; and when he has delivered his sentiments, is the use of the church's voice simply and exclusively to say, Amen? Dr

* Congreg. Indep., page 321. † Eccl. Polity, page 273.

Wardlaw, I am sure, would not sanction a conclusion so preposterous in itself, and so insulting to christian society. He must hold, then, that the members of a church, as '*bona fide* judges,' are entitled to investigate laws, facts, everything connected with a case under judgment, and to declare what they think, and why they think so, in the same free and unrestrained manner as do the judges of the land. This is expressly avowed by Dr Davidson: 'The church,' he says, 'may fairly judge of the authority which a pastor ought to exercise agreeably to the tenor of the New Testament; and should he transgress that boundary, he may be tenderly told of it.'* These things being so, *where is the power of the pastorate?* We found Dr Wardlaw contending that ministers have rule; to what is it now reduced? A pastor points out the law of Christ. Yes, but the members are bound, in duty, to judge whether the comment accord with the text; and if they think that scripture and the commentator differ, they are to take an independent view of the law, as he did, and to lift up their 'voice' in declaration of their mind, as he did, and to decide for themselves, as he did; and all this, though it should be in opposition to his judgment. Where, then, is the power of rule? There is 'a conjoint government,' says Dr Wardlaw; for 'government is to be conducted by the office-bearers and the congregation conjointly.' The pastors are to govern with the people. But since there is a conjoint

* Eccles. Polity, page 273.

government, the converse proposition must hold true also, that the people are to govern with the pastors; and so nothing is said of one of the parties that is not said of the other. None are distinctively governors, for all govern conjointly; *i.e.*, all are governors together. But that is just to say, that none are rulers, properly so called; for when we speak of any bearing rule in society, we always mean a distinctive rule; and if a person were said to be ruler of any community, we would hold ourselves to have been misled by the language, when it turned out to mean that the individual had no rule beyond the rights which he held in common with all others. It appears to me, therefore, that the advocates of Congregationalism build a wall and pull it down again—first insisting that authority and rule are vested in ministers, and then assigning the same authority and rule to a whole society, in which the pastor acts as an individual, as one of many, and has no power, except what he exercises conjointly with all others, and they with him. He judges, but they judge his judgment; 'it is their right and their duty to judge his doctrine and to judge his administration;' and if they reach a contrary conclusion, they of course *carry it over him by their majority*. Dr Wardlaw speaks much about the church concurring; but if there arise a collision of judgment in their conjoint government, *the concurrence must be on the side of the pastor*. In all cases of difference, the part of the *ruler* is to *submit*, or to *resign*.

(3.) *Our Independent brethren, to qualify the unwork-*

*ableness of democracy, impose such restrictions on the people as in effect to crush their freedom, and lodge in the pastorate a despotic authority.* We have found the members of churches declared to be judges in ecclesiastical cases, to have the power of *bona fide* judgment, and to be united in the government with their spiritual teachers. This is high privilege to look upon. But is a community of rulers an idea reducible to practice? If every one in a multitude were to deport himself or herself as a conjoint governor or governess, and use a freedom of thought and 'voice' accordant with the pretension, could any business be transacted, any progress made in improvement and enterprise? Our Congregational friends have no notion of making the experiment. None are more averse than their ablest writers to popular licence; and having raised the spirit of democracy to demolish sessions,* they forthwith circumscribe and shackle it, that it may not be insubordinate and troublesome to ministers. Dr Wardlaw asserts in capital letters that 'ALL ARE NOT RULERS.'† He holds that pastors are the *sole* rulers. But how is this? Each church, he maintains, is entrusted with its own government, and that government is to be conducted, 'not by the office-bearers alone as its representatives, but by the office-bearers and the congregation conjointly.'‡ One would think that where there is a *conjoint government* there must be *conjoint governors;* and yet the people, though conjoint

* A Session is a company of elders who rule, presided over by an elder who both rules and teaches

† Congregational Independency, p. 310. ‡ P. 234.

in the government, are not governors—not rulers at all! This is a somewhat startling announcement to parties triumphing in the establishment of their judicial and self-governing powers to the utter exclusion of sessional interference. Nor do fuller explanations dissipate the apprehensions which may thus be awakened. 'Others,' says Dr Davidson, 'would limit it (the authority of pastors) to advice or counsel. But the terms employed in the New Testament, namely, *rule* as applied to the elders, *obedience* as applied to the church, mean more than this, else they have been ill chosen. It is not natural to dilute the whole authority possessed by pastors into mere advice or counsel.'* A minister, then, may point out the law of Christ, and advise and counsel the people to follow the course which he thinks scriptural; but if he can do nothing more, 'mere advice and counsel' are defective (Dr Davidson thinks) in efficacy, and constitute at the best a diluted authority. He would arm pastors with more of the executive principle. '1st. (he says) They preside in all meetings of the church. 2d. They call the attention of the members to the principles or laws laid down by Christ, and insist on obedience to them. . . . In meetings of the church, no member should speak without permission of the elders, (teaching elders) nor continue to do so when they impose silence. The elders give and withhold liberty of speech when the church is assembled. In such meetings, no member should oppose the judgment of the presiding elder.'† Do Independent ministers

* Ecclesiastical Polity, p. 273. † Page 274.

adopt, in sober earnest, these maxims, and reduce them to practice? If so, we must sympathise with the ejaculation of Dr Wardlaw—'Let it not be said to Independents, Your pastors have no power!'

Where, again, shall we find an assembly of 'judges,' or an assembly called deliberative, or an assembly of any kind, except a church, that would endure such control? Every tongue is tied till the chairman looses it; and so soon as it offends him, he can tie it again. The church has the privilege of concurring in his sentence, but opposition to his judgment is an impertinence or a crime.

And what if any have 'a just and sufficient reason' for non-compliance? Dr Davidson himself supposes such a case. And what redress does he provide for such grievance, what relief from such oppression? 'In the position they occupy,' he says, 'they should have a thorough persuasion of the propriety of resistance, by virtue of Christ's laws, before they venture to assume an attitude of insubordination. And not only must they have this conviction, but be also able to set it forth before the church, commending it to them as reasonable and right. They must explain the grounds of their conviction, placing them in the clear light of reason and scripture, and demonstrating their adequateness to justify disobedience.'* There is something like privilege here, I confess; something of the nature of judicial prerogative—a warrant to exercise personal judgment in relation to the

* Ecclesiastical Polity, p. 274.

meaning of scripture—to form a conviction, and express that conviction, and explain the grounds of it, and all this in direct contradiction to the declared views of the minister. Armed with this permission, an aggrieved member rises to address the chair. His expression is not promising to the eye of the chairman, who, believing good order to be perilled, forthwith beckons him to hold his peace, and reminds him that 'in meetings of the church, no member should speak without permission of the elders, nor continue to do so when they impose silence.' 'I stand upon my rights,' exclaims the complainant. 'And I stand upon mine,' responds the pastor; 'and it belongs to the elders to give and withhold liberty of speech when the church is assembled.' What is the aggrieved member to do then? Dr Davidson has not told us, and I am not able to discover. Yet he declares that 'simplicity is another excellence of the (Independent) system. . . . In the accomplishment of its objects, nothing is so complicated in its nature as to bewilder the judgment of its members. All is plain and intelligible because of its simplicity. The brethren know immediately how to proceed in the adjustment of a matter when it arises.'*

Some may object that Dr Davidson is but one writer, and that very much stress should not be laid on the unguarded expressions of any individual. I answer that many of the most eminent Independents have expressed themselves similarly:—'It is my

* Ecclesiastical Polity, p. 383.

decided conviction,' says Mr James, 'that in *some* of our churches the pastor is depressed far below his just level. He is considered merely in the light of a speaking brother. He has no official distinction or authority.'* In another part of the same work, Mr James says, 'Real Congregationalism is not democracy. It maintains, indeed, that every separate congregation of believers has the entire power of government within itself; but it does not teach that that power is vested in the private members of the church. It admits and affirms, in common with other systems, that pastors alone are the *rulers* of the church; but it more fully explains the nature, and limits, and extent of this authority than they.'† Still farther on, in the same treatise, we are told—'All the proceedings at a church meeting should either *emanate directly from the pastor*, or from others *by his previous knowledge and consent.* If this be neglected, and members are allowed to introduce any business which they please, our church meetings would very much resemble the scene which was exhibited at the tower of Babel.'‡ 'AS LITTLE DISCUSSION,' he says, 'AS IS REALLY POSSIBLE should take place at our church meetings. The admonition of the apostle is always in season, but never more so than in reference to the times of the assembling of the saints: "Let every man be slow to speak." Nothing but the most obvious necessity should induce a single individual to utter a syllable; and when any

* Christian Fellowship, p. 57. † Ibid, p. 164.
‡ Ibid, p. 170.

one does deliver his opinion, it should not be in a prating dogmatical manner, but in few words, modestly spoken. Talking assemblies soon become disorderly ones.'* Mr James gives the minister an absolute negative on the admission of members to the church, and says, 'No member should presume to bring forward a candidate in opposition to the opinion of the pastor.'† Dr Campbell goes further, and not only lodges with the minister a negative on the admission of members, but makes the whole matter of admission rest with himself. 'There is not one instance,' he says, 'in the New Testament, of a case being submitted to the scrutiny of the church in order to baptism, or of any confession of faith being made afterwards to the church in order to admission into fellowship. The commission of Christ to his apostles clothes the evangelist or pastor at once with the authority and responsibility of administering the ordinance of baptism, and consequently of admitting members.'‡ These writers are devoted friends of freedom, and of all human rights. Why, then, do they assign such extraordinary power to a pastor? Because he must have it if he is to conduct a conjoint government with a multitude. When matters of importance and delicacy are to be judged of by assembled hundreds of men and women, old and young, experienced and inexperienced, the alternative lies between this absoluteness and anarchy. An old

* Christian Fellowship, p. 171. I give italics and capitals as they are found in the original.

† Christian Fellowship, p. 172. ‡ Church Fellowship, p. 19.

and well-trained church may know how the business needs to be managed. They may be aware that scripture must be held as 'not teaching that power is vested in the private members of the church;' that 'no member should presume to bring forward a candidate in opposition to the opinion of the pastor;' that 'all proceedings must emanate directly from him, or from others, by his previous knowledge or consent;' that 'talking' is out of the question; and that a 'syllable' is not to be uttered unless in so far as the pastor sees urgent necessity for it, and 'gives liberty of speech,' which he is equally entitled at any moment to 'withhold;' in a word, that 'no member should oppose the judgment of the presiding elder.' These rules, to the extent they are observed, will no doubt secure tranquillity.

But can a new society be expected on a sudden to conform itself to this restraint? When told that they have 'a conjoint government with the pastor;' that it is 'their right and duty to judge his doctrine by the instructions of Christ, and equally their right and duty to judge his administration by the laws of Christ;' and that all this language is to be understood of *bona fide* judgment,' they must be tempted to think that they have some 'power,' and to essay the exercise of it, and to become restive or even tumultuous when they are told that they are 'not rulers,' and have 'not power,' and that they are not to speak when their president imposes silence. My Independent brethren will bear me witness that there is here a real difficulty—a difficulty which prevents many new churches

from being formed in the large towns of England, and causes the very inadequate substitute of preaching stations to be preferred as safer.

Such are the conclusions on which able and excellent men are driven, when, in denying superintendence to sessions, they lodge self-government in a whole society, and are ready to be overpowered by the democracy which they have sanctioned. In the truest love for the church, they are constrained to repress popular licence. We shall perceive in the sequel that a true popular liberty must be sought for by 'a more excellent way.'

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## CHAPTER II.

*Scripture does not teach us that pastors and their flocks should be conjoined in the government of the church—In behalf of this system of polity our Lord's law for the settlement of private offences,* Matt. xviii. 15–17, *and the functions assigned to ordinary members of the church,* 1 Cor. v., vi., *are vainly pleaded.*

HOWEVER ill-assorted and incongruous any scheme of ecclesiastical administration might appear to our view, yet, if it had the plain and explicit sanction of revelation, our duty would be *the utmost possible obedience;* and where we could not reconcile seeming contradictions, it would become us to wait patiently in the dark till more light should be afforded us. But I cannot think that we are subjected in this case to any such necessity—that we are required by scrip-

ture to regard pastors as rulers, and sole rulers; and then conjoin the people with them in the government; and then, in terror of popular commotion, assign to pastors a despotic control of church meetings. It is allowed, on our part, that churches are addressed and exhorted by the inspired writers both in regard to the exercise of discipline and the settlement of differences; and the only question is, whether a christian society may, like other societies, transact its business through chosen and proper functionaries, or, unlike other societies, must be understood to manage all its affairs directly and collectively?

The law which our Lord lays down for the settlement of private differences * has been frequently adduced as shedding much light on the scriptural mode of conducting discipline. It has been confidently pleaded, however, in behalf of contrary systems of procedure. Our Lord directs that when a person who has committed an offence continues obdurate and impenitent, the party offended, after taking other steps fruitlessly, shall in the end 'tell it to the church.'

I readily concede that by the church we naturally understand here a religious society. But the question remains whether the use of the word *church* requires us to understand that all the members of the society are to be convened, and to sit in judgment on the accusation; or whether we are allowed to suppose—and other passages of scripture require us to believe—that the church may be regarded as conducting

* Matt. xviii. 15–17.

such affairs through fitting functionaries, and committing the disposal of them to wise men, able to judge between their brethren. When offending parties are dealt with by our sessions, and yield the penitential obedience required of them, they are said, in common phrase, to 'give satisfaction to the church.' The elders are regarded as acting for the church, and the church as acting through them. But the controversialist of future times would reason hastily in seizing on the phrase, 'satisfaction to the church,' and arguing from it that all the business of each church was conducted by its assembled members. I accept the rule which Dr Wardlaw here prescribes, that 'in any particular passage, a word should be understood in the sense in which it is commonly used, unless reason of necessity, or at the least of strong propriety, can be shown for understanding it otherwise.'* What, then, does the common use of language indicate as to the mode in which 'the church,' of which our Lord speaks, managed cases of discipline? The question may be regarded as referring to the practice of the synagogues as then existing, or to the subsequent practice of the christian churches. Dr Wardlaw quotes from Principal Campbell a long passage, in which it is contended that the ecclesiastical administration of the synagogue, at least in cases of trespass, was entirely popular. An opposite opinion has been learnedly maintained; and Dr Wardlaw says, 'I am aware that a good deal

* Congreg. Indep., page 64.

has been made (by the advocates of representative church government) of a supposed allusion to the Jewish synagogues, and to the constitution and practice of discipline in them.' There is little satisfaction in pondering the erudite disquisitions of Vitringa, Lightfoot, and others, regarding the synagogue; the very ingenuity of these writers is constantly reminding us of the paucity of their facts, and the defectiveness of their proofs. 'It is exceedingly difficult,' says Dr Davidson, 'if not impossible, to ascertain the condition and form of the Jewish synagogue in the time of Christ. Those who have tried to describe it, can go no higher for definite information, than to writers of the second century; Philo and Josephus furnishing very meagre notices; while authors belonging to the third, fourth, eighth, and ninth, even Moses Maimonides in the twelfth, are appealed to. All these are too recent to be of much weight, or entitled to implicit credit. Jewish writers of a comparatively late period, were scarcely competent to give an accurate account of the synagogue service and government in the time of Christ, especially as they were accustomed to transfer later customs to much earlier times. Doubtless the mode of worship in the synagogue was considerably changed after the Jewish polity became extinct. It is also generally admitted that the Jews borrowed, it may be unconsciously, several things from the practice of christians, particularly of christian apostates. That uncertainty attaches to the sources whence our knowledge of the synagogue has been derived, is apparent from the fact,

that Vitringa and Lightfoot differ in their opinions on several important points of its constitution; that the former is compelled to resort to conjecture in not a few cases, for the purpose of making out an analogy; and that occasional assertions are made, virtually amounting to a concession of the untractableness of the argument undertaken.'* If I may offer an opinion on likelihood, where we can learn little more, I venture to say, that the supposition of a popular administration prevailing in the synagogues appears extremely improbable. That it ever did so, is not proved; that it would continue to do so through successive centuries, is almost incredible. Principal Campbell shows how, in christian societies constituted analogously to the synagogues, if not after their model, small distinctions were gradually widened, to the injury and restriction of general freedom; and through the tendencies of our nature operating on such elements, the people were finally subjected to the lordly dictation of their pastors. Did the distinctions in the synagogue not so widen? did the tendencies of our nature fail to operate there? and down to the times of our Lord, were the rights of the poor, in despite of all contrary influences, triumphantly ascendant? An affirmative answer is not favoured by the spirit of the country or of the epoch. Much is said, and with too much truth, about prelatical aggressions in the earlier centuries of the history of the christian church. But culpable as prelates are known to have

* Eccles. Polity, pp. 48, 49.

been, it cannot be alleged that they were more grasping or intolerant than the Pharisees. Various incidents mentioned in the New Testament serve to show that the Pharisaic sway in religion did usurp the discipline of the synagogue. The Jews had agreed,* 'that if any man did confess that Jesus was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.' This language seems to be sufficiently general, and viewed by itself it might be interpreted as comprehensive of the whole Jewish nation. But scripture abounds in general terms used in a limited sense. If we inquire what Jews had the making of this agreement, or by what agency it was carried into execution, we have these queries answered in the context: 'They *brought to the Pharisees* him that aforetime was blind.' 'The Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight.' 'Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day.' In the spirit of despising others, these self-righteous inquisitors said to the subject of miraculous cure, who had modestly vindicated his benefactor, 'Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? *And they cast him out.*' The men who plumed themselves on being THE TEACHERS, were the same who cast people out of the synagogue, and who deemed the arrogance of saying a kind word for their benefit a sufficient crime to merit such excommunication. If, then, the appeal is made to the synagogue as it subsisted in the days of our Lord, I

* John ix. 22, etc.

suspect that little can be expected from its decision in favour of Congregationalism.

It is proper to add, that Dr Wardlaw lays no stress on the passage which he quotes from Dr Campbell in favour of synagogue democracy. That our Lord makes any allusion at all to the synagogue he considers 'little more than conjectural.' He asks, 'Why not regard our divine Master as then speaking *for the future*, and in this, as in some other matters, reserving the clear and full understanding of his words till the time when the Holy Spirit was to lead them into all truth? . . . In this way the precise meaning of the words of the Lord will fall to be ascertained from the subsequent record of apostolic practice, and from the counsels given by apostolic authority.' * To this statement of the case I accede. The command to tell an offence, not repented of, to the church, *does not give its own full meaning;* therefore *it is not decisive of the controversy between Congregationalists and Presbyterians;* and to know how the church is to dispose of the offences of which it is told, we must turn to passages which exhibit to us the christian church in existence and action, and which develop more clearly its organisation and working; for the terms employed by our Lord, says Dr Wardlaw, ought to be understood according to the sense in which they are afterwards, by his inspired and commissioned vicegerents, applied to the constitution and transactions of the New Testament church. Let us turn, then, to those

* Congreg. Indep., page 72.

subsequent writings on which Dr Wardlaw places his reliance, as expository of the direction which Christ gave by anticipation. Dr Wardlaw lays great stress on the fifth and sixth chapters of 1 Corinthians, as showing that all members of a church are to be conjoined in the government with the pastorate. This, in fact, after the passage just considered, is the only portion of scripture by which he seeks to establish the conjoint system of government, in opposition to the pervading language of the New Testament, which assigns superintendence to presbyters, and subordination to the people.

I begin the consideration of Paul's language regarding church order addressed to the christians at Corinth by remarking, that Dr Wardlaw's principle of interpretation would assign to private church members a regulation of those duties which he himself elsewhere restricts to ministers, such as the administration of ordinances. The apostle speaks *in language equally general about the dispensation of the Lord's Supper* as about *the trial of offenders*. So palpable is this fact, that Dr Davidson thinks the elders would certainly, in such a case, have been addressed, if there had been elders; and he concludes, therefore, that this church was yet in a nascent state, and not fully organised—on which supposition its practice would prove nothing regarding a church with perfected order, and in full organisation. 'From the first epistle to the Corinthians,' says Dr Davidson, 'we infer that the church at Corinth had no office-bearers at the time when Paul wrote to them. . . . In

the observance of the Supper, certain abuses prevailed which the apostle wished to correct. His exhortations and rebukes, however, are not addressed to the elders, but *to the disciples themselves*. The brethren are addressed, not the authorised administrators of ordinances. Should not the latter have been addressed, had the church been provided with them?'* Other expositors of scripture have expressed the same view. 'That some of the churches,' says Principal Campbell, 'to which Paul's epistles were directed had no fixed ministry, is evident from the tenor of the epistles themselves, particularly from those written to the Corinthians.'† These chapters, then, on Dr Wardlaw's principle of interpretation, would prove too much for his cause; they would prove not only that the people should have judicial functions, but be charged with the due administration of ordinances. And if Dr Davidson's opinion be received, that this church had not yet stated officers, *an exceptional state can be no model for ordinary procedure.*

But let us take the case as Dr Wardlaw presents it, and allow him all the advantage of his own exegesis of the epistle. The fifth and sixth chapters are allowed to present cases of like character, and to be explicable on like principles. The sixth chapter opens thus: 'Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not

* Eccles. Polity, p. 285.

† On Church Hist., vol. i., page 154.

before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?'

In Dr Wardlaw's general explanation of these verses I am disposed to concur. It seems strange that the church should be directed to set them who were *least esteemed* to *judge*. But '*least esteemed*,' observes Dr Wardlaw, 'is not a translation of the original word ἐξουθενημένους. It means neither more nor less than despised, treated with contempt. They were so treating their brethren when they thus passed them by as incompetent or as undeserving of their trust, and carried their matters of difference before the heathen; and his injunction is, that they should no more act thus contemptuously towards them, but constitute those their judges whom they were in this manner despising.' *

* Congreg. Indep., pp. 250, 251. Billroth translates the term ἐξουθενημένους, 'those whose reputation is impaired or little thought of.'—*See Biblical Cabinet, No. XXI.* This rendering does not give exactly the same sense. The apostle, if Dr Wardlaw's exposition is correct, does not speak of general 'reputation,' but of parties being treated, in the particular matters alluded to, as if they were of no repute or consequence.

That these verses relate to ecclesiastical procedure, though about secular differences, Dr Wardlaw explicitly maintains. 'We know,' he says, 'from 1 Cor. vi. 1–7, that the churches did take cognisance of differences even as to secular matters which were amongst their members.'*

After these preliminary remarks, we are prepared to consider the bearing of the passage on the question at issue. So far the language of the apostle has that generality on which Dr Wardlaw founds so confidently, as proving the judicial status of all church members. 'Are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?' Here all seem to be addressed, and to have worthiness to judge ascribed to them without exception. But so much the more adverse is this phraseology to Dr Wardlaw's argument, when the rest of the verses show us how to understand this general language wherever it may occur, and plainly demands for it a restricted signification. 'Set them to judge,' says the apostle. But why set any to judge if all were judges? 'His injunction is,' says Dr Wardlaw, 'that they should constitute those their judges,' etc. But why should some constitute others judges, if they were all judges without exception?

'Is it so,' says Paul, 'that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?' Does not this language of the apostle imply that there might be some in the church who were not wise, in the sense of competency

* Congreg. Indep., page 335.

to settle differences—nay, that there might be very many who might not be able to judge, and whom therefore it would be absurd to bid do what they were not able to do; but that the apostle was clear in his cause if only one in all the church was fit for the duty, because this one should then be set to judge between his brethren? The argument of Paul demanded that *one* competent to judge should be found in a church: the argument of Dr Wardlaw demands that *every one* in a church shall be a judge, and of course fit for his calling. Suppose that the apostle's counsel was followed, that some wise men were set to judge, and in accordance with their character judged wisely; suppose that this church came afterwards to elect rulers, would not these wise men be elected? and if judgment was vested in them before ordination to office, would it not be so after ordination, and would not this church present the exact aspect of a Presbyterian church acting judicially through its session?

How does Dr Wardlaw get out of this position? 'The procedure recommended,' he says, 'as the best for bringing all to a clear understanding and a satisfactory issue, appears to be the nomination of such individuals of their number as, from character, occupation, and habits, might in each case be best qualified for the task, who should institute a full investigation of the facts, should form a judgment on the merits, and should report both, more or less minutely, as the nature of the matter in controversy might require, to the church; that thus enlightened,

they might pronounce their collective and authoritative sentence.' *

In this delineation there is a little phrase which greatly affects the meaning of the whole—the phrase I allude to is that of '*forming a judgment.*' By forming a judgment we commonly mean forming an opinion; and thus Dr Wardlaw intimates that the parties set to judge were not to judge after all, but only to consider what should be judged. The pronouncing of a judgment Dr Wardlaw reserves for the collective and authoritative sentence of the church. But where does Dr Wardlaw find that to judge means to form an opinion? In contending for the judicial functions of church members, he claimed for the word judge all that is needful to '*bona fide* judgment;' why does he strip it of this signification now, and dilute judgment into indecisive and unauthoritative notion? And where does the record say a syllable about reporting to the church, and the church pronouncing sentence? In Paul's language there is nothing of the sort; these clauses are pure glosses. If I were to speak of Dr Wardlaw's reasoning in this case as he does of Dr Mason's in another case, I would say that these clauses are 'a presumptuous apocryphal interpolation. . . . Have the supporters of Presbyterianism [Independency] any right to blame us for declining to own ourselves bound by such apocryphal matter, or for marvelling at the presumption of foisting it into the text?' † I think,

* Congreg. Indep., page 251. † Ibid, page 289.

however, that this phraseology is too energetic. I am sure that Dr Wardlaw meant nothing presumptuous, and that he would relinquish Independency the same hour in which he saw it to be at variance with God's word. I therefore merely say, in terms with which Dr Wardlaw has elsewhere supplied me, that 'if we are allowed the free use of probabilities and suppositions, for getting over difficulties, they can seldom be long in our way.'

I have noticed the difficulties attaching to the position of Drs Wardlaw and Davidson, as it is defended by themselves. Principal Campbell occupies substantially the same ground, but with enough of difference to obviate, apparently at least, some of the foregoing objections. He thinks that the Corinthian church was instructed to refer disputes about property to the decision of arbiters. 'It is manifest,' he says, 'that the apostle does not recommend it to the people to take such secular matters under their own cognisance collectively, but only to appoint proper persons to judge in them.' * On the other hand, if cases were of a moral nature, they were to be adjudicated on, he thinks, by the entire society: 'Not only were private offences then judged by the church, that is, the congregation, but also those scandals which affected the whole christian fraternity.' † While secular cases were thus to be referred to arbiters, and moral cases to the whole church, the pastor, in all spiritual matters lying beyond these provinces, was

* On Church Hist., vol. i. p. 58. † Ibid, p. 55.

to be invested with authority; and Principal Campbell thinks that his power among Independents is not, generally speaking, sufficiently maintained. 'That the pastors were from the beginning vested with a superintendence over the congregation purely in what concerned spiritual matters, cannot,' he says, 'be questioned. Some of the titles that are given them in scripture (ἡγουμενοι, προισταμενοι, guides, governors) undoubtedly imply this much, as do also the terms in which the duty of the people to their pastors is recommended: πειθεσθε, ὑπειχετε, obey, submit—which manifestly require a respectful observance on their part. For this reason I imagine that the generality of those modern sects which have adopted the Congregational or Independent plan, as it is called, have gone to an extreme, though not the most common extreme, in bringing the pastor's authority too low.' * At the same time, Dr Campbell is careful to remark, that his demand for authority to pastors does not apply to administration which he had already claimed for the flock. 'All, however, that I purpose,' he says, 'by quoting the aforesaid titles and commands (titles of ministers, and commands to obey them), is to show that in what related to the peculiar duties of their office a reverential attention was acknowledged to be due to them as the guides and guardians of the flock. There were some things which from the beginning were conducted in common by the pastors, the deacons, and the whole congregation.' † Here

* On Church Hist., p. 174. † Ibid, p. 175.

confusion is avoided by division of labour. It is not in the same matters that all are to decide, and a few arbiters are to decide; nor is it in the same province that the people are to govern with the pastor, and yet be subject to him. These inconsistencies are here avoided. Arbiters are to get temporal questions committed to them; the church collectively is to dispose of moral offences; and the pastor in all things else is to have a spiritual control. There is here no contradiction. This very dissipation of obscurity, however, makes some difficulties more palpable and dismaying.

(1.) Why should the church entertain in any manner disputes plainly and merely civil? If parties differed about a purely secular business, there might be good reason why they should themselves choose arbiters, but not why the church should take up such a question, and choose arbiters for them. Does it belong to the church to set some to judge in such matters? Principal Campbell says of Christ, that 'far from affecting any secular power himself, he refused a royalty of this sort when the people would have conferred it, and would not take upon him to decide in a matter of civil right and property, though desired. "Man," said he to the person who applied to him, "who made me a judge or a divider over you?"'* But if it was unsuitable for Christ, is it not also, and on like grounds, unsuitable in his church to affect secular power, and to decide in

* On Church Hist., vol. i. p. 42.

matters of civil right and property, either after one fashion or another?

(2.) There is no discoverable reason why a secular question should demand for its settlement wise men able to judge, and a question of guilt or innocence should be safely committed to a whole society, and thus to the comparatively unwise and disqualified for judgment in that society. Where criminality is charged, and the charge is repelled—where sophistry has to be exposed, and evasion intercepted, and loquacity restrained, and the course of impartial justice composedly prosecuted amid encompassing temptations to excitement and temper, one might suppose that in these circumstances, if in any circumstances, the attribute of *wisdom* would have its appropriate exercise, and find all its resources needed for its exigencies.

(3.) Since Paul speaks as if secular matters were to be judged by 'saints' generally, and in addressing the Corinthian church says, 'If the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?' and yet in the language which follows expresses himself restrictedly, and makes it unequivocally evident that the church was to fulfil this duty by setting some to judge who were competent for the task—why should we not explain his language in regard to moral causes on the same principles, and understand him as there also ascribing to the church what he designed it should perform by selected and competent functionaries?

(4.) If presbyters had no more authority than others

in the trial of offenders, and it were distinctly understood that the passages ascribing superintendence to the pastorate had no application to this department of duty, then orderly administration of discipline would become impossible. I do not wonder that Drs Wardlaw and Davidson do not avail themselves of Dr Campbell's distinctions. To have a trial conducted by a whole society, and whatever passions might be stirred, whatever turbulence occasioned, no recognised government for the enforcement of law and the repression of tumult,—this would be a mode of administration imprinted with folly, and pregnant with ruin. Here our Congregational friends do not put off pastoral authority, but bring into requisition all its succours. Here it is that no case may be broached without previous communication with the minister, or even without his express consent. Here it is that no person may speak without permission from his teaching presbyters, or continue speaking when they have imposed silence. Here it is where none may oppose the judgment of the presiding elder. This is a practical repudiation of Dr Campbell's hypothesis.

(5.) When civil causes have been referred to arbiters, and matters of scandal have been entrusted to the whole church, it is difficult to say precisely in what the spiritual control claimed by Dr Campbell for pastors is to consist. Doctrine remains: but the minister is not surely to dictate a creed to his people. They are to search the scriptures daily, whether these things be so. It is rather hard, then, to blame

ministers for letting down their authority while interdicting its introduction wherever it might be supposed to be exercised. Having so largely reduced the exercise of it, and yet censured the depression of it, Dr Campbell should have said where and how it was to be upheld.

(6.) It does not appear, from a careful perusal of the sixth chapter of 1 Corinthians, that the disputes for the settlement of which Paul recommends the appointment of competent judges, were entirely of a secular nature. It is true, as Principal Campbell says, that persons may differ in regard to the title to a particular subject, each claiming it as his, and yet neither may accuse the other of injurious or unchristian treatment. But it is by no means evident that the cases spoken of in the chapter under consideration were of this nature. Had they been so, little scandal could have resulted from bringing them before the ordinary legal tribunals. It was the wrong perpetrated in such transactions, and the mutual recriminations to which injustice gave rise, that exposed christianity to reproach in the courts of Pagan magistrates. 'Now therefore,' says the apostle, verses 7–9, 'there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with auother: why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?' With no probability can it be maintained that disputes so described by the apostle had in them no moral ele-

ment, and embodied no accusation of injurious or unchristian treatment. The language has quite as much suitableness to a criminal as to a civil process; and we have therefore the distinct authority of the apostle for saying, that when charges of wrong and unrighteousness are made, the church can best dispose of them, by referring adjudication upon them to a select body—to a set of wise men able to judge between their brethren.

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## CHAPTER III.

*The Congregationalist system of government is not necessary to Christian freedom.*

CONGREGATIONALISM wears a popular aspect in declaring that all communicants are *bona fide* judges, and that they are conjoined in government with the pastors. These judicial and governing functions do not amount to very much when they are explained and qualified to render them compatible with peace —when we are told that the people are not rulers, and that pastors are the sole rulers—when we are assured that true Independency is not democracy, and that power is not lodged in the private members of the church—when freedom of speech is meted out to the people in syllables, or positively withheld; and when in church meetings all business must emanate from the pastor, and no member may oppose the judgment of the presiding elder. Still, some may

think that popular assemblages, however conducted, afford a certain guarantee, wanting in Presbytery, for the maintenance of general freedom. If the Presbyterian polity were characteristically tyrannical, this objection to it would be fatal. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. I would rather have free institutions, with many inconsistencies and conflicts, than the yoke and the spirit of bondage. But however Presbytery may have been abused to purposes of intolerance, it is not in its own principles oppressive. While contending in the preceding paragraphs that elders should have rule, I have not controverted the true liberty of the church. I have defended the only system by which true liberty can be preserved—that of popular election and representation. Only some are to judge, but they are to be set to judge by christian suffrage. The judges are to be chosen from the people and by the people, and are to form a convention small enough to judge calmly and dispassionately, and yet large enough to defend the weak against the strong, and keep at bay the aggressions of anarchy on the one hand, and despotism on the other. That is the truest freedom which affords the strongest guarantees for impartial and upright dealing; and if these are best to be had by an aggrieved individual from a large and miscellaneous assemblage, the students of government have strangely erred in all their principles, reasonings, and deductions. I admit that sessions, presbyteries, and all such bodies, should enter into office through a christian suffrage. On no other footing do I, or can

I, defend their presidency. The right of the people to choose their office-bearers we hold to be most sacred and inalienable: 'Whereof the Holy Ghost is also a witness unto us;' for appointments to office in the apostolic age were either directly by the call of God, or instrumentally by the call of the church; and when the former has been withdrawn, and is no more accessible, the latter is alone scriptural, and comes to us with all the force of a pattern and a law.

Election of rulers, then, should lie with the members of the church, and be unfettered in every element and aspect; and, if it be so, that election secures, and not only secures, but constitutes liberty. What is the palladium of political citizenship?—it is representation: the keenest reformer asks nothing more than to be fairly represented; and it would be strange, indeed, if the palladium of civil liberty were the occasion and implement of ecclesiastical domination. Some have objected that elders, in being placed on the same footing, as to rule, with ministers, cease to be representatives, because ministers hold office from Christ, and are responsible, not to the church, but to its Head, for the discharge of their functions. This objection is more specious than solid. There are, no doubt, points of difference between civil and ecclesiastical representation. The members of the church are not at liberty to institute within it what offices they please, or to dispense with any which their divine Master has appointed. Persons filling these offices may not take the popular will for their supreme rule, or imagine that they hold office merely to give that

will effect. If, then, it be understood by representation that office-bearers are merely to echo the sentiments and fulfil the wishes of constituents, we must acknowledge that neither ministers nor elders are in such a sense representatives. But this definition would be extreme even in secular relations, for it would reduce parliamentary representation to mere delegation, and leave no room for intrepid and self-denying conscientiousness. That spiritual functionaries, when *freely elected, and forming ecclesiastical assemblies*, are representative so far as to secure the benefits of representation to the church, appears in many particulars. Protestants are generally agreed that the commission of Christ was given to his church; and all, whether ministers or elders, who exercise functions included in that commission, are, in this view, the church's representatives. These office-bearers are further elected by christian suffrage. In the case of elders they are chosen by the people from their own number. While acting for the church they have a manifest interest to please the church, in so far as duty will permit them. And, finally, these freely chosen councils are numerous enough to check individual tyranny, and yet sufficiently select to exclude anarchy. An obscure church member supposes himself aggrieved. In seeking redress, he might have little hope from a minister whom he had offended, and as little from an excited throng, swayed by a dictator or a demagogue. But he brings his case before chosen judges—chosen from the people, and by the people—expressly appointed to conduct these matters

—having a character to keep or lose in the mode of settling them—the ornaments of their station—whom any court or country would think eligible as jurymen. If even they be swayed by personal or local prejudices, he can carry his cause to a larger and more disinterested tribunal, just as freely elected. This is representation, and this is liberty—the liberty of states, the liberty of churches, the only liberty which truly consists with the being of society. 'Nations have become free,' says Dr Vaughan, 'in proportion as they have been able to give power to the representative principle, along with the other elements of society, and only in that proportion. The representative principle may rarely appear to be all that it should be. But without it nothing is as it should be. It may not seem to be perfect, but it is the only power that has proved effectual, permanently, to diminish the evils which must otherwise blight and destroy humanity without end. It may have its defects, its faults, its revolting abuses; but it precludes greater evils, and brings an amount of good which nothing else can bring. . . . If a nation [or a church], therefore, is to possess a system of liberty, the nation [or church] must realise it, and realise it through the medium of a representative government.'* These are the words of an eminent Independent; but whether they plead more for Independency or Presbytery I leave the reader to determine. Dr Wardlaw sometimes utters like sentiments as I have cited from Dr

* Congregationalism, page 29.

Vaughan. At page 340, he praises the British Constitution as giving us civil liberty. I invite him, with all respect, to consider, that, without popular representation, the popular element which he so highly and justly eulogises would be speedily and utterly annihilated.

# PART IV.

## ON THE DISTINCTION OF TEACHING AND RULING ELDERS.

### CHAPTER I.

*The Question stated.*

It is conceded by those with whom I am now reasoning, that churches should have Presbyters or Elders. Some, however, maintain that all elders should be preaching elders, that is, pastors, in the technical sense of the term. It is the doctrine of Presbyterians generally that churches, besides elders who preach, should have elders who do not preach, but confine themselves to the work of superintendence. Though all elders rule, those who are appointed to rule only are, for the sake of distinction, called *ruling elders*. Dr Wardlaw characterises 'this subject as being one of the great turning points of the controversy between Presbyterians and Independents.' But Dr Wardlaw knows that in former times Independents highly approved of ruling elders; and this will abundantly appear before my argument is concluded. Here I shall introduce only a few sentences from the writings of Dr Thomas M'Crie, showing that the article of a ruling eldership was not anciently a party question: 'It would appear that these elders were not

only approved of by the earliest English Independents during their exile in Holland, but that they existed in their churches; for we are informed by Hoornbeek, that one of their principal objections to the continental Presbyterians was, that they appointed these elders only from year to year, and not for life. "*Propter mutationem Presbyteriorum apud nos annuam, qui juxta ipsos debeunt esse perpetui.*"* They were approved of by Dr Owen, who has furnished one of the best and most able vindications of the office of these elders that ever was published,† and who, even as he is quoted by Mr Orme (Append., p. 515,) seems to express his regret to his church in London, that they wanted these office-bearers. They are asserted by Mr Cotton‡ to have been instituted by Christ, and are represented as having been *established very generally in the American churches.* The same, too, is the doctrine of Goodwin.§ And it is observed by the Westminster Independents, that "the scripture says much of two sorts of elders, teaching and ruling, and in some places so plaine, as if of purpose to distinguish them; and that *the whole reformed churches*

* This was the practice, for a long time, of the French and Dutch churches. See, too, Altare Damascen., p. 927; Summa Controv., p. 767.

According to the First Book of Discipline, new elders and deacons were to be elected every year, and the practice continued in many congregations down to a very late period. See *Scott's Register of the Kirk Session of Perth*, MS., Adv. Lib.

† Book on the Gospel Church.

‡ Way of the Churches of Christ in New England, pp. 13–35.

§ Catechism on Church Government, p. 19.

had these different elders."'*† I am now to defend the office of ruling elder by arguments drawn, in no small measure, from such writings as those of Owen, Goodwin, and Cotton; and I will leave it to the candour of the reader, after carefully pondering them, to say whether it would be to the disadvantage of modern Independents to revert to the principles of their venerated forefathers.

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## CHAPTER II.

*The distinction pleaded for has its foundation in facts.*

We naturally expect that churches will have members qualified to direct their affairs, who would not be qualified to deliver public instruction, and that these men should have positions assigned them corresponding with their gifts, and be appointed directors or rulers, but not preachers.

Dr Wardlaw urges the plea of 'naturalness' in favour of the distinction of elders and deacons. The charge of churches naturally divides itself, he contends, into the two departments of spiritual and secular oversight. But spiritual oversight is not less naturally divisible into ruling and teaching functions. Wherever an important cause has to be advanced, men to speak and men to guide are equally in requisi-

* Reasons against the Third Proposition concerning Presbyterial Government, pp. 3 and 40.

† The Miscellaneous Writings of Dr M'Crie, pp. 490, 491.

tion. Is the traffic in slaves detested, and is a British public invoked to put it down?—then public meetings are held; the best speakers who can be had are engaged to address these assemblages; boards of direction are formed to take charge of petitions, and to ply the legislature; and very likely the speakers are appointed members of these boards, in consideration of their office, services, and character. But when was it ever known that all the hearers were made directors, or that the direction was confided to the speakers alone? In such cases, it is at once seen that the work, to be well conducted, must be in the hands of a select agency; and the conclusion is just as speedily reached, that individuals who could not have spoken three continuous sentences in the presence of a multitude, may yet be far better fitted than the speakers themselves to turn to practical account the desirable impression which their speeches have produced. Thus, in the walks of philanthropy, the working of a beneficent measure is not retained by the crowd, neither is it committed to one or two oratorical debaters; but a board of management is appointed, and in that board the eloquent and the practical members sit side by side, having the same privileges and the same powers. It is superfluous to demonstrate how unlike this procedure is to Episcopacy on the one hand, and to Independency on the other — to the exclusive rule of bishops and the universal rule of church members—and how closely analogous to the appointment of an eldership, in which the minister or public speaker is included.

## CHAPTER III.

*Teaching and Ruling Elders are distinguished in Scripture—full consideration of* Rom. xii. 6–8; 1 Cor. xii. 28, *and* 1 Tim. v. 17.

THE New Testament indicates, in various passages, that, while all elders were rulers, only some of them taught publicly, so that a distinction existed among them of teaching and ruling elders.

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul says, 'Having, then, gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.'* That the apostle, in this language, points out a number of distinct offices, appears plainly enough from the connexion. He exhorts, in the third verse, that no one 'should think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.' No one was to exalt himself above his brethren, as possessing higher gifts than they. The

* Ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν διάφορα, εἴτε προφητείαν, κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως· εἴτε διακονίαν, ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ· εἴτε ὁ διδάσκων, ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ· εἴτε ὁ παρακαλῶν, ἐν τῇ παρακλήσει· ὁ μεταδιδοὺς, ἐν ἁπλότητι· ὁ προϊστάμενος, ἐν σπουδῇ· ὁ ἐλεῶν, ἐν ἱλαρότητι.—Rom. xii. 6–8.

faith exercised in performing duties, or working miracles, was the most important element in them; and as this faith refers all to divine favour, it would, in the measure of it, produce sobriety of thought as to personal attainment. The apostle continues—'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.' Each member of the body, it is here reasoned, has a distinct office; but none of them is so independent of the rest that it may glory over them. They are one body; and if, therefore, one member should disparage others, it would, in virtue of this relation, be disparaging itself—it would be dishonouring the whole, of which it formed part. Each member is to be honoured, not by degrading other members, but by executing effectively its own particular work. 'Having, then,' the apostle proceeds, 'gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy,' etc. No candid reader, I think, can follow this train without perceiving that the persons spoken of are here represented as having distinct offices, like the members of the body, and are cautioned against making the difference between them an occasion of vain-glorious strife. If it be so, 'he that ruleth' is a member of Christ's mystical body, holding a distinct office—an office which may be held separately from other offices; and he ought not, in consequence of any views entertained as to its relative importance, either to despise others or to be despised by them.

It is no objection to this interpretation, that we cannot now define with clearness or certainty all the offices mentioned. An attempt has been sometimes made to discriminate completely their respective provinces. One hypothesis which has been proposed is, that the first two terms in the apostle's enumeration (prophecy and ministry) are general heads, and that under one or other of these all the particulars which follow must be classified. Prophecy is supposed to have for its subdivisions 'teaching' and exhorting;' while ministry is subdivided into 'giving,' 'ruling,' and 'showing mercy.' If this exposition be at all just, the ruler, instead of being confounded with the teacher, is placed in a separate registry.

Various attempts, which I am not careful to confute at length, have been made to evade the force of this passage. The apostle has been said to speak of gifts, and not of offices. In the immediate context we find both words used; and they are so with marked propriety, inasmuch as gifts qualified for office, and the offices themselves were gifts, both to the persons clothed with them, and to the church benefited by them. Does office then cease to be office because it may be viewed in the light of a boon? The apostle has been alleged by others to speak of ruling one's family. There is here an important admission, that ruling in the strict sense of the term is intended; but when the subject of the whole passage is the church, how can an individual word be understood of domestic superintendence?

Dr Wardlaw says, 'The whole passage might be

interpreted as a simple direction respecting the spirit and manner in which the duties of prophecy, of ministry, of exhorting, of giving, of ruling, and of showing mercy, ought to be fulfilled without designing to express any distinctive appropriation of each of these to a particular official class.'* This exposition is not accordant with the illustration drawn by the apostle in the context, from the human body. The corporeal functions, besides being exhibited as fitly fulfilled, are assigned to their respective organs; we have 'a distinctive appropriation of each' office 'to a particular' member. But, says Dr Wardlaw, 'if the principle of interpretation must be that of official distinction; then let it, in this sense, be consistently carried out. And if it be so carried out, a Presbyterian can have no more right to assume (as, from the power of habitual association, he may be apt to do) that "he that teacheth" is a ruler as well as a teacher, than another has to assume that "he that ruleth" is a teacher as well as a ruler. So far as the fair exegesis of this passage goes, the teacher is as distinct from the ruler, as the ruler is from the teacher.'†

Here it is supposed that teaching and ruling do exhibit official distinction. On that supposition, I so far agree with Dr Wardlaw as to admit that, if this were the only passage treating of these departments of office, we might imagine just as readily that teachers only taught, as that rulers only ruled. But,

* Congreg. Indep., page 194. † Page 196.

as Dr Wardlaw himself has ably shown, all public teachers are declared in other parts of scripture to be also rulers, and so to combine the two departments of duty in their appointment; and if we were, in the absence of such proof, to assume the converse to be true, and to hold that all rulers are also public teachers; then, be it observed, we should have here two descriptions of one class of persons, having precisely the same engagements. While, if we understand that rulers only ruled, then teachers, though rulers, are still distinguished by their teaching, and a sufficient ground is plainly afforded for a discriminative classification.

The views now expressed have had the concurrence of eminent men of all religious parties. Peter Martyr, a distinguished Italian reformer, who, on the invitation of Edward VI., became afterwards professor of divinity at Oxford, having cited the words, 'He that ruleth with diligence,' proceeds, 'Although I doubt not that there were many rulers in the church, yet, to confess the truth, this appears to me to be most aptly understood of elders, not, indeed, of those who presided over the dispensation of word and doctrine, but of those who were given as assistants to pastors. These, as being prudent, zealous, and pious men, were chosen from the laity. Their business was to take charge principally of discipline—to see what every one did —and in every house and family to afford aid, as it was needed, whether for the mind or for the body. For the church had its elders, or, so to speak, its senate, who consulted about things as the time

demanded. Paul describes this sort of ministry, not only in this place, but also in his first epistle to Timothy; for he thus writes, "Elders are worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine." By which words he seems to intimate, that there are some elders who teach and propound the word of God; and that there are others who, while they do not this, nevertheless preside in the church as presbyters or elders.'*

Dr Thomas Goodwin, one of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, who ranks with the most learned Independents of the 17th century, says, in commenting on the 12th chapter to the Romans, and more especially the 8th verse—'Though to rule is a pastor's office as well as an elder's, yet the elder is more especially said to rule, because he is wholly set apart to it. It is his proper calling, which he is wholly appointed to mind, and in a special manner. . . . Though the superior (officer) in common performs the same work with the inferior; yet the inferior is set apart to it wholly, which the other is not, but to some other of an higher kind, by reason of intending which he cannot so fully and wholly intend the other; and, therefore, it is observable, that speaking of a ruler's office in ruling, he says, let him do it with diligence, for that is his work which he is to mind; and there will be enough of it to fill his hands.'†

The Rev. Thomas Hooker, a celebrated Indepen-

* Loci Communes. Class. quar. cap. i., p. 746. Lond. 1583.
† The Government of the Churches, book vi. chap. 8.

dent pastor of New England, in his 'Survey of Church Discipline,' resolutely defends the ruling elder's place. He declares that Rom. xii. 7 gives in witness to this truth, where all these offices are numbered and named expressly.*

Dr Davidson says of 'him that ruleth,' 'Could he not have been a bishop or elder who devoted himself to the department of governing, because he had talents for it, leaving the preaching of the word to those who excelled in preaching? Surely this idea is probable, as it is consistent with less obscure passages which allude to elders.'† It is here admitted by Dr Davidson, that 'he that ruleth' may be naturally understood of elders who in fact ruled only, though he claims for them the right to have also preached. This doctrine, of men having been appointed to preach who were incompetent for the duty, and by whom it was in consequence neglected, will be considered afterwards. Enough for the present, that Dr Davidson speaks of it as 'surely probable' that the elder spoken of did not preach, and had not talents for preaching, and *was in practice a ruling elder.*

A similar passage occurs in 1 Cor. xii. The apostle there says, verse 28: 'God hath set some in the church: first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healing,

* Quoted by Dr Miller—Office of the Ruling Elder, chap. 7.
† Ecclesiastical Polity, p. 192.

helps, governments, diversities of tongues.'* We have here an enumeration of the offices, ordinary and extraordinary, subsisting in the primitive church; and among these express and separate mention is made of 'governments.' In the preceding verses the apostle censures all jealousies and feuds about the endowments possessed, and the places occupied, by different members of the church. He draws argument and illustration, as in the epistle to the Romans, from the complex membership and yet harmonious action of the human body—one bodily organ need not glory over another, for each is honoured or dishonoured in all the rest: 'Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church: first, apostles,' etc. Is it not perfectly plain that the ecclesiastical offices and the bodily members are exhibited in this connexion as equally distinct, and as having equally little cause for relative boasting? And if so, governments, that is, governors, hold a distinct office, which may be filled separately. 'Are all apostles? (the inspired author proceeds)—are all prophets?' This language marks yet more emphatically the demarcation of the offices before mentioned. Does every officer fill every

* Καὶ οὓς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ Θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, εἶτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν.

office? No: each office has its own officer. The higher office, indeed, includes the lower, but the lower does not include the higher; for, as Dr Goodwin remarks, 'that which is common to a superior officer with the inferior, may yet be made a proper difference of that inferior officer;' * and, as there are prophets who are not apostles, and teachers who are not prophets, so there are governors who are not any one of the three; and who, nevertheless, should be contented and faithful in the situation assigned them. Dr Wardlaw says, 'Helps and governments are the two items in the list from which the conclusion [in favour of ruling elders] is drawn. The one is made to signify *deacons*, and the other *ruling elders*. And I think this is just as likely to be the true interpretation as any other, perhaps the most likely—understanding ruling elders, however, not in the Presbyterian sense of elders, whose office it was to rule apart from teaching, but of bishops, whose office included both instruction and rule.' Dr Wardlaw here allows that governments are most likely to be ruling elders, only he will have them to be also teaching elders. It is a strong objection to this exposition, that teachers, whom Dr Wardlaw most reasonably identifies with preaching bishops, ['all teachers were pastors,' †] had appeared already in the enumeration here given, and needed not to be re-introduced. We accept his acknowledgment that governments are 'most likely

* Government of the Churches, book vi., chap. 8.
† Congreg. Indep., p. 183.

ruling elders,' but we see no reason to combine with ruling what had a prior and separate place in the list. And, indeed, to append the teaching here is to make the ruling elders the same as the teachers, and so to charge on the apostle a vain repetition.

To weaken our conclusions derived from this passage, Dr Wardlaw quotes comments from many authors, to show how variously it has been interpreted. And what passage of scripture relating to government or doctrine has not received conflicting interpretations? If, however, an appeal is to be made to authorities, then it cannot be denied that the passage has been understood as we understand it by many able and disinterested judges. The Rev. Herbert Thorndike, of the Anglican Church, says, in his 'Discourse of Religious Assemblies,'—'There is *no reason to doubt* that the men whom the apostle (1 Cor. xii. 28, and Ephes. iv. 11) called doctors or teachers, are those of the presbyters who had the abilities of preaching and teaching the people at their assemblies; that *those of the presbyters who preached not*, are called here by the apostle *governments*. . . . There were two parts of the presbyter's office, viz., teaching and governing; the one whereof some attained not, even in the apostle's times.'* I give the passage as quoted by Dr Miller, in his excellent work on the 'Ruling Elder,' because I have not access to the original at present. I find, however, in other works of Mr Thorndike, that he is very angry with those of his

* Discourse of Religious Assemblies, chap. iv., p. 117.

own day who made like use of his observations, as Dr Miller and others have made since. In his 'Right of the Church,' etc., he says, 'Myself have the honour to be alleged, for one that approve lay elders, even in that place of that very discourse where I answer the best arguments that ever I heard made for them, only because I said then, as now, that we are not bound to think that all presbyters preached during the apostle's times,' * etc. To settle the dispute with this learned prelatist, we concede to him that there should be no lay elders, for all elders are spiritual office-bearers: † and he concedes to us, as does also Dr Davidson, first, that *every church should be ruled by a body of elders;* and, secondly, that *we are not bound to think that all the presbyters preached in the apostle's times.* Points of difference remain, but with so much in common we are not disposed to quarrel. The learned Pareus, a German divine of the era of the Reformation, says, in his commentary on this passage: 'He so designates, undoubtedly, the elders who presided over discipline. For the primitive church had its senate, who preserved good morals among the people, while the apostles and teachers were left free to preach. The apostle indicates this plainly enough, (1 Tim. v. 17,) where he specifies two kinds of presbyters. These governors, then,

* Chap. iii., p. 127.

† Dr Wilson, in his 'Primitive Government of Christian Churches,' constantly stigmatises ruling elders as being lay elders, and founds on this misnomer a large proportion of his reasoning against them. Dr Davidson follows the same course.

were not princes or prætors armed with the sword, but presbyters, excelling others in gravity, experience, authority, chosen from amidst the assembly with the church's consent, who aided or relieved the pastors in administering discipline.'

Dr Whitby, a learned Episcopalian, tells us that the elders among the Jews were of two sorts: first, such as governed in the synagogue; and, secondly, such as ministered in reading and expounding their scriptures and traditions. The second class he pronounces to have been the most honourable, and adds, 'accordingly the apostle, reckoning up the offices God had appointed in the church, places teachers before governments,' (1 Cor. xii.)* In these words, governing is allowed to be a distinct office from teaching.

The celebrated Dr Owen, one of the brightest ornaments of Independency, says, in his treatise on Worship and Discipline, by way of question and answer—'*Question* 31. Are there appointed any elders in the church whose office and duty consist in rule and government only? *Answer.* Elders not called to teach ordinarily, or administer the sacraments, but to assist and help in the rule and government of the church, are mentioned in the scripture. (Rom. xii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28; 1 Tim. v. 17.) . . . Besides that, some light in this matter may be taken from the church of the Jews, wherein the elders of the people were joined in rule with the priests, both in the Sanhedrim and all lesser assemblies, there is in the

* See Commentary on 1 Tim. v. 17.

gospel express mention of persons that were assigned peculiarly for rule and government in the church, as 1 Cor. xiii. 28; and it is in vain pretended that those words, helps, governments, do denote gifts only, seeing the apostle expressly enumerates the persons in office, or officers, which the Lord Christ then used in the foundation and rule of the churches as then planted.'

The most decisive passage in favour of ruling elders remains to be considered. Paul says, 'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine.'* On all sides it is admitted that the word *double*, as here used, simply denotes *ample* or *abundant*. It frequently occurs in scripture in the same sense. Of Jerusalem it is said, 'She hath received double for all her sins.'† The sentiment is, not that Jerusalem had been afflicted twice as much as was necessary or suitable, but that she had been amply chastened for her transgression. So *double honour* does not, in the passage under consideration, denote twice as much honour as some other parties received, but simply much or adequate honour. Elders who ruled well were to be liberally honoured. And what kind of honour were they to get? The word *honour* admits of being rendered *pay* or *wages*, and this interpretation is

* Οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι διπλῆς τιμῆς ἀξιούσθωσαν, μάλιστα οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ.—1 Tim. v. 17.

† Is. xl. 2.

rendered the more probable here, by the allusions afterwards made to the feeding of the ox, and the rewarding of the labourer. The office-bearers in the primitive churches were generally poor men; and when they sacrificed time and substance in ruling the church well, it is very conceivable that Paul should require the loss to be fully made up to them by the societies for whose sake the sacrifice was made. He did not, as Drs Wardlaw and Davidson seem to suppose, arbitrarily limit pay to preaching, but enunciated the general principles, that they who 'have sown spiritual things should reap carnal things;'* that all who 'wait at the altar are partakers with the altar;'† and that the scripture saith, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the labourer [whatever be his department of labour] is worthy of his reward.'‡ Many elders are still in circumstances which would render such compensation both equitable and advantageous. At the same time, some able expositors, irrespectively of the question now agitated, regard the tone of the passage as lowered by the explanation of honour as meaning money. They explain it of *respect*, and understand the apostle to say, that the office-bearers mentioned ought to be honoured in a way becoming them, as the ox and the labourer have their appropriate remuneration. Our Independent brethren consider the pecuniary view the more favourable to them, and I will assume it to be correct. The apostle on this supposition claims a sufficient pecuniary

* 1 Cor. ix. 11. † Ib. ix. 13. ‡ 1 Tim. v. 18.

acknowledgment for elders who rule well. But let it be observed, that he does not claim it for all of them equally. He requires it especially for them who labour in the word and doctrine. If any simply ruled well, they were to get liberal remuneration; but if any, in addition to ruling well, also laboured in the word and doctrine, they were to receive a *specially* ample salary, since they devoted themselves more entirely to the service of the church—spending and being spent for its sake. This is the simple and palpable import of the apostle's words; and so understood, they draw a line of demarcation between elders who restricted themselves to ruling well, and others who associated with ruling the labours of teaching. The primitive churches had elders who ruled, and among these, some elders who also taught, as Presbyterian churches have in our own times. Various attempts have been made to invalidate this conclusion.

Dr Wardlaw thinks that the word translated *rule* does not here signify to rule only, but is a general expression for ministerial duty, comprising the functions alike of instruction and government. The first part of the verse, then, simply denotes that faithful ministers are to be amply recompensed; and as for the latter part of the verse, Dr Wardlaw thinks that its import is intensive, and that it claims special liberality towards presbyters who are not simply faithful, but who are excessively laborious. In support of this exposition, Dr Wardlaw pleads that the word translated *labour* in the last clause, denotes emphatically to be laborious. This, he tells us, is its proper meaning:

'It does not denote work merely, but *labour*, and labour of an exhausting kind and degree.'* An examination, however, of the passages of the New Testament in which the word occurs, does not bear out this criticism. It usually denotes not extraordinary labour, but labour simply considered. When intensity of toil is to be expressed, some additional epithet is introduced for that purpose. 'I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour.'† Our Lord did not mean to say, that the apostles were sent to reap produce on which they had bestowed no extraordinary labour, but which had cost them no toil whatever. This is evident from what follows: 'Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.' 'I have showed you all things,' says Paul, 'how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak.'‡ 'Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands.'§ In these passages labour has plainly the sense we attach to it, when we speak of men labouring for their bread, and call them labourers; and in the latter, Paul expressly explains labour by common manual occupation: 'Let him labour'—how? 'working with his hands.' 'Greet Mary,' says Paul, 'who bestowed MUCH labour on us.'‖ If the word labour had denoted extraordinary effort of itself, there would have been no need to conjoin with it the epithet *much* to give it force. The same remark applies to the 12th verse of the same chapter, where it is said, 'Salute the beloved Persis, which

* Congreg. Indep., p. 212. † John iv. 38.
‡ Acts xx. 35. § Eph. iv. 28. ‖ Rom. xvi. 6.

laboured MUCH in the Lord.' In these, and many other passages, the word is descriptive of duty only, and does not of itself mark excessive labour. The expression, 'To rule well,' is acknowledged to denote praiseworthy laboriousness, or, as Dr Wardlaw says, 'superior fidelity and zeal;' and hence Paul claims for all so ruling, double or ample honour. To speak of still greater laboriousness than what was confessedly 'superior'—creating by *intensity* which far exceeded *superiority*, a still more special claim on the liberality of the church—would be a remarkable climax, rearing superlative above superlative, and would require very emphatic phraseology indeed. But we have in the clause under consideration nothing of the sort. We have the word *labour* simply, without any such epithets as the same writer elsewhere introduces, when he designs to convey the idea of severe toil. Hence we conclude that the distinction made by the apostle does not respect the *intensity* of labour, but the *kind* of it. To rule well, entitled the ruler to ample honour; but those rulers who were distinguished from others by the *special employment* of labouring *in word and doctrine*, were specially entitled to generous consideration.

I have supposed, in the preceding remarks, that the word rendered to 'rule' might denote ministerial duty in general. Dr Wardlaw says, 'It is susceptible of a more general or a more special signification, according to the circumstances and connexion in which it is fouud. It may denote the general duty of "*being over*" the church, considered as comprehensive

of both the departments of teaching and ruling. It is equally appropriate, when used of either.—Or, if it happens to be introduced where the former of the two departments is otherwise mentioned, and is thus used distinctively, it may denote more specifically the latter, the department of ruling.' *

With all respect for Dr Wardlaw, I must contravert his assertion, that the word translated *rule* is equally appropriate when used either of *government* or *teaching*. Its more usual and proper meaning is to govern, as any Greek lexicon will testify; and it should be so understood, unless there be very strong reason to the contrary. But the reason is here all on the side of the ordinary signification. The department of teaching is, in the language of Dr Wardlaw, 'otherwise mentioned,' namely, at the close of the verse. The word translated to *rule* 'is there used distinctively,' and should be held to 'denote more specifically the department of ruling.' Our former conclusion is hence confirmed, that Paul claims especial honour for *a special department of service*. All elders ruling the church well deserved well of the church; but they who superadded to ruling the distinctive labour of teaching, brought the society instructed by them under special obligations.

Dr Wardlaw thus paraphrases the passage:—'Let the elders (presbyters, bishops) who fulfil well—with superior fidelity and zeal—the duties of their oversight, be counted deserving of the more ample recom-

* Congreg. Indep., p. 206.

pense; especially those of them who give themselves assiduously to the department of the ministry of the gospel,—who "labour in word and doctrine."' *

The element of which Dr Wardlaw is desirous to get rid, is not here eliminated. The labouring in word and doctrine, mentioned in the close, is surely no part of the faithful and zealous oversight noticed at the commencement; else why give us the same thing a second time, and to what novel element could the 'especially' then have regard? We have plainly in the paraphrase, as in the passage, two sections of elders discriminated, and the discriminating circumstance is the work of teaching, with which one section of them are charged. It would seem as if Dr Wardlaw must, in homage to the text, and in contradiction to his own comments, distinguish between oversight in the sense of rule, and that department of the ministry of the gospel which they have who labour in word and doctrine.

The import of the passage, in relation to the question now debated, depends mainly on the meaning attached to the term *especially*. I have said elsewhere† that I accept the exposition of it given by Dr Wardlaw. His language is, 'According to what may I think, be called invariable usage; it must be understood as representing those who are described in the latter part of the verse, as comprehended under the more general description in the former, not as a distinct class of persons, but a select portion of the same

* Congreg. Indep., p. 217.

† See Ruling Eldership of the Christian Church, Third Edition, p. 21.

class, distinguished by a specified particularity.'* Dr Wardlaw here tells us that, from a general class described, '*especially*' singles out a select portion distinguished by a specified particularity. In this instance elders are the general class comprehending all presbyters; from this general class the word 'especially' singles out, in the latter part of the verse, those among them who were distinguished by the specified particularity of public teaching. Dr Wardlaw cites some very appropriate examples: 'But if any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.'† 'Here, "*those of his own house*,"' says Dr Wardlaw, 'those belonging to his own family, are a specifically distinguished portion of the more comprehensive designation "his own," which may be understood of his relations at large.'‡ This example is clearly in favour of my argument. The phrase 'his own' describes relations at large. The term 'specially' marks off from these relations some distinguished from the rest by the peculiarity of being of his own house. So far all relations are identified, as they are all a man's own; so far they differ, as only some of them belong to a man's own house. In like manner, faithful elders are so far identified, as they all rule well; and so far they differ, as only some labour in the word and doctrine. Surely no illustration could be more to my purpose. Paul says, 'We trust in the living God, who is the

* Congreg. Indep., p. 213. † 1 Tim. v. 8. ‡ Page 214.

Saviour (or preserver) of all men, specially of those that believe.'* 'Those that believe,' says Dr Wardlaw, 'were included among the "all men," but distinguished from the rest by their faith.' Quite correct; and so pastors are included among elders, but distinguished from the rest by public teaching. If 'specially' can distinguish believers from infidels, surely it may suffice to discriminate elders who rule from elders who rule and teach. 'On no other principle,' says Dr Wardlaw, 'can that adverb (especially) have its legitimate signification—the signification which the idiomatic use of it in the original language has fixed as its appropriate import, except on the principle that the "elders who rule well," in the beginning of the verse, are the same order of office-bearers of which those in the end of it, who "labour in word and doctrine," are a *still more select* description, adding to the distinguishing excellence of the former a farther distinguishing excellence of their own—those elders, namely, who to eminence in ruling joined laboriousness in teaching,'† etc. In accordance with this language, to which I readily subscribe as fully conceding and clearly enunciating the distinction I have contended for, the members of faithful sessions are all one order of office-bearers as *rulers*; the faithful ministers in these sessions are a still more select description, adding to the distinguishing excellence of other elders the further distinguishing excellence of laboriousness in teaching. The delineation thus

* 1 Tim. iv. 10. † Congreg. Indep., p. 215.

given by Dr Wardlaw seems to me to express, in most fitting words, the identical conclusions which I draw from the passage.

Dr Davidson expressly admits that this text distinguishes elders who simply ruled well from elders who publicly taught. He quotes from me the following comments: 'These words could suggest to an unbiassed reader only one meaning, that all elders who rule well are worthy of abundant honour, but especially those of their number who, besides ruling well, also labour in word and doctrine. Of course the passage so interpreted bears, that of the elders who rule well, only some labour in word and doctrine; that is, there are ruling elders, and among these teaching elders, as we have at the present day.'

Having cited this passage, Dr Davidson says, 'Few would object to this reasoning, understood in its obvious sense; for a distinction is manifestly implied between those elders that rule well, and those who labour in word and doctrine.'* He speaks of Presbyterians as 'proving that some elders in the primitive churches ruled, while others preached.' 'That,' he adds, 'is a position too manifest to be called in question. Other parts of the New Testament would warrant that conclusion, had the text in the epistle to Timothy been wanting.'† The entire position contended for is here conceded, so far as regards practice. As we have teaching and ruling elders, it is admitted that the primitive churches also had preaching elders

* Ecclesiastical Polity, p. 183. † Ibid, p. 186.

and elders who ruled without preaching; and if we are right *in fact*, where do we err? Dr Davidson thinks we are wrong in making any official distinction between elders. They should all get the same appointment, though eventually they may devote themselves to different occupations. He contends that 'the nature of the destination is merely such as arises from the possession of various talents, directed to the discharge of different duties, while all have an equal right to perform the same functions.'* This interpretation appears to me to be full of unlikelihood and difficulty. Would modest and conscientious men accept a solemn appointment to preach the gospel, when they knew that they had not 'talents' for this duty, and had no serious purpose to attempt the discharge of it? If incompetent men were willing to be appointed preachers, would the apostles have affixed the seal of their approbation to any such presumption? Under the guidance of the apostles, it seems, a number of men were solemnly set apart, not simply to rule, for which they were qualified, but also to administer the word, for which they were not qualified—a duty which they were neither competent for nor expected to discharge; and for such men, living in the neglect of important functions with which they had been solemnly invested, Paul asked from the church ample honour! Is it not far more conceivable—and the question is one of rational interpretation—that so many were appointed to teach

* Ecclesiastical Polity, p. 183.

publicly as were needed and fitted for public teaching; and that they who did nothing more than rule, had nothing more included in their commission? Facts are here exponents of principles; what faithful men *did*, shows us *what was given them in charge*. But the facts of the primitive church are confessedly in our favour: only some elders taught—the rest restricted themselves to government; and so it is now in our Presbyterian congregations.

The contempt which Dr Davidson expresses for ruling elders is rendered more extraordinary by his admission, that, in the first instance, elders were appointed only or mainly to rule. He says, 'All the circumstances that have relation to the point conspire to show that the elders were chosen in the first instance mainly for government.' * He elsewhere cites with approbation the statement of Neander, that 'ruling and governing (προστηναι and κυβερνᾶν) evidently exhaust what belonged from the beginning to the office of presbyter or bishop, and for which it was originally instituted.' † Surely elders who were not appointed to preach, but simply to rule or govern, were, in the strictest sense of the words, ruling elders; and how vain is it then for Dr Davidson to speak of Calvin as having invented the office! Nor does Dr Davidson deny that teaching elders were associated with ruling elders. He thinks that some, having the gift of teaching, came to be admitted into the eldership, and that these parties thenceforward

* Eccles. Polity, p. 149. † Ibid, p. 193.

both ruled and taught officially. 'When the charism (or endowment) of teaching,' he says, 'became an ordinary gift, such as might be attained by many christians in the exercise of their abilities, it is probable that these teachers were often taken into the college of elders, and thus formally constituted officers.'* Here was a college of ruling elders, and among them were teachers. Our churches have, in like manner, colleges of elders, and among them teachers; are we not then adhering to the apostolic pattern?

The only evasion I can think of is, that the primitive churches *at a later period* were otherwise constituted—that elders appointed in the first instance to rule only, were eventually appointed always to rule and preach. But where is the record of any such changes? and where the likelihood that the christian church of the apostolic times resembled a sea of sand, shifting its proportions and outline with all fluctuating breezes? If it were so, then the apostles sanctioned nothing so much as versatility—as a fickle and time-serving expediency: they have set us conflicting examples in relation to the same point of duty, and have, in important matters, so turned their back on their own practice, that if we do as they at one period confessedly did, our conduct merits to be attacked with asperity, or hooted at in derision! I fear that Dr Davidson has allowed himself to give too much heed to German speculations, in lending his respected

* Ecclesiastical Polity, p. 148.

name to such volatile principles. If it be allowed that the primitive churches, under the direction of the apostles, had elders appointed to rule only, and elders appointed both to rule and teach, I am inclined 'to stand fast in the apostle's doctrine' under any circumstances, and at all hazards. 'Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.' *

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## CHAPTER IV.

*That the primitive Elders were not all teaching Elders, appears from their number.*

It is a very unfair statement of our argument to refer to the passages already considered as if they constituted the entire scriptural proof for the office of ruling elder. The evidence now to be adduced *is not less scriptural*, and, though somewhat indirect, not less pertinent, and *not less decisive*. If each of the primitive churches had been presided over by one elder, the inference would have been strong that he united the functions of ruling and teaching; but if it appear that every church, however small and poor, had a company of elders, the supposition of these elders having been all public instructors is attended with obvious and insuperable difficulties.

* Phil. iv. 9.

This view of the matter has presented itself strongly to some intelligent Congregationalists, and they have exerted themselves to controvert the fact of a plurality of elders in the primitive churches as the best method of evading our disrelished deductions. Dr Bennet, in his 'Theology of the Early Christian Church,' a learned and valuable work,* says, 'The language of scripture often leads to the conclusion, that it was not the design of Christ to require a plurality of bishops in every church; for this office is mentioned in the singular, when the deacons are spoken of in the plural. (1 Tim. iii. 2, 8.) The argument of the apostle, derived from the father of a family, as Clemens Alexandrinus observes, leads to the same conclusion: "A bishop must rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" Here a single ruler is supposed to preside in the church, as in a family. In the Revelation, the seven stars are the angels, as Origen observes, or presidents of the seven churches. The term pastor supposes one shepherd over one flock.' †

In this passage, the supposition of each of the primitive churches having had a plurality of elders is controverted, and an attempt is made to show that scripture favours the one-elder system now common with Independents. What, then, are the defences of

* Delivered as a course of lectures under the auspices of the Committee of the Congregational Library; published in 1841.

† Page 223.

this position? We are told that this officer is mentioned in the singular, when the deacons are spoken of in the plural; and we are referred for an example of this to 1 Tim. iii. 2, 8. In the second verse of that chapter it is said, 'a bishop must be blameless;' in the eighth verse it is said, 'likewise must the deacons be grave.' Does not this look as if there were to be one bishop and a number of deacons? Such is the argument of Dr Bennet; but it surely rests upon a very small circumstance. If we read the first verse, we easily perceive why one bishop is mentioned in the second. The apostle says in the former, 'This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.' Here it is plain enough why one bishop is specified: 'If a man desire the office of a bishop.' Could the apostle have said, 'If a man desire the office of two bishops, or a college of bishops?' It is surely enough that one man desire the office of one bishop. When the apostle, then, had used the singular in the first verse, was it not most natural and proper to continue it in the second, and to say, 'a bishop then must be blameless?' Again, Dr Bennet argues that the comparison instituted by the apostle between ruling one's own house and taking care of the church of God, implies that there is to be one ruler in the church, as there is in the family. The danger of thus extending the emblems of scripture beyond the exact use which scripture makes of them, could easily be shown. But, in this case, the task is superfluous. When the phrase 'church of God' is used, as it is here, without any locality being mentioned, it denotes not a frac-

tional society of christians, but the church universal. Surely in this church there is more than one subordinate office-bearer; and to it, therefore, the criticism of Dr Bennet cannot apply. That the apostle is to be so understood in this connexion, is farther evident from what he says in the fifteenth verse of the same chapter: 'But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.' What the apostle had before called the 'church of God,' he here calls the 'church of the living God;' and when he represents it, moreover, as the 'pillar and ground of the truth,' we see that he speaks of the faithful collectively, over whom there are many office-bearers. Once more, Dr Bennet tells us, that in the Revelation the seven stars are the angels or presidents of the seven churches. By this he means to prove, that each church had a single president. But one of the seven churches was Ephesus; and Dr Bennet admits, that, 'as the church at Ephesus had more than one elder, the apostle addresses them in the plural as bishops.' * What, then, becomes of the angelic argument? Who was the one president at Ephesus, when the church in that city had more than one elder? By the author's own showing, we have elders at Ephesus, and among them a presiding elder. So it is not in any Independent church; but so it is exactly in Presbyterian churches, where elders who rule are presided over, in their ses-

* Theology of the Early Christian Church, p. 222.

sional assemblages, by one elder, who both rules and teaches. Finally, Dr Bennet argues that the term pastor supposes one shepherd over the flock. This argument is not happier than the rest. One flock may have a plurality of shepherds. The term shepherd in the plural is associated with the term flock in the singular, very often in the sacred volume. 'Neither did my shepherds,' says God by Ezekiel, xxxiv. 8–10, 'search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock: therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand,' etc. In addressing the Ephesian elders, Paul exhorts them 'to take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock.' So that we have here one flock, and a number of shepherds; and how then does the emblem of a shepherd suppose singleness of superintendence? Bishop Stillingfleet, after quoting this passage, says, it is 'observable, *first*, that the body of christians in Ephesus is called the flock of the church, and not the several flocks and churches over which God hath made you bishops. *Secondly*, that all those spoken to were such as had a pastoral charge of this one flock.' *

On a review, then, of these arguments, I feel warranted to say that they utterly fail of their object, and that the language of scripture never leads to the conclusion of its not being the design of Christ to require a plurality of bishops in every church.

* Irenicum, p. 347.

But there is much evidence leading to a conclusion directly the reverse. It is admitted that there was a close resemblance between the Jewish synagogues and the first christian churches; and we know that every synagogue had at the fewest three elders. Dr Goodwin says, 'They (the synagogues) used to have three at least, that a major vote might cast it among the rulers.' * Dr Neander says, 'Since the appointment of presbyters in the christian church entirely corresponded with that of presbyters in the Jewish synagogue, at least in their original constitution, so we may conclude, that if a plurality of elders stood at the head of the synagogue, the same was the case with the first christian church.' † If this reasoning be objected to as analogical and inferential merely, there is no want of direct scriptural testimony to the same effect. We read of elders in each of the churches of Jerusalem, Ephesus, and Philippi. Paul, in addressing the Hebrews, says, 'Obey them that have the rule over you.' ‡ James exhorts him who is sick to 'call for the elders of the church.' These are individual cases; but we have more comprehensive examples on record. Paul says to Titus, 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.' § Nor is this the only instance where such comprehensive language occurs. We read of Paul and Barnabas, that 'they

* Government of the Churches, book ii., chap. 4.
† Planting of the Christian Church, vol. I., p. 41—Note.
‡ Heb. xiii. 17. § Titus i. 5.

ordained elders in every church.'* Here it is not said 'in every city,' but 'in every church;' so that no room is left for dubiety. The early christian fathers, in speaking of churches, always suppose each of them to have a number of elders, so often as they give us any intimation on the subject. Dr Owen says, 'The pattern of the first churches constituted by the apostles, which it is our duty to imitate and follow as our rule, constantly expresseth and declares that many elders were appointed by them in every church. There is no mention in the scripture, no mention in antiquity, of any church wherein there was not more elders than one, nor doth that church answer the original pattern where it is otherwise.' † The proof, then, we hold to be complete and decisive, that each of the primitive churches had not one elder, as the Independent churches have now, but a number of elders, as we see exemplified in our Presbyterian polity.

The more recent works of Independent writers wisely cede the position, that the primitive churches had each a plurality of elders. Dr Halley, in his Congregational Lecture, maintains that this characteristic was common to the christian churches and the Jewish synagogues.‡ Dr Vaughan, in his treatise on Congregationalism, says, 'The existence of such a practice in all the early churches whose usage in this respect is come down to us, is a remarkable fact, and

* Acts xiv. 23.

† True Nature of a Gospel Church, chap. 7.

‡ See page 63.

enough to justify suspicion as to the wisdom of our own prevalent usage.' Dr Wardlaw assents to my declaration, that every church had *bishops* and deacons for its fixed and abiding office-bearers.* He elsewhere observes more expressly, 'I must candidly say that the evidence for the fact of a plurality of elders or bishops in the apostolic churches is of the two sides the stronger.' † Dr Davidson says, 'Nothing seems to us more certain, than that there was a plurality of elders in the primitive churches.' ‡

If the elders of a primitive church were all public teachers, where was the room for that exhaustive labour in teaching which Dr Wardlaw supposed the term 'especially' to indicate? If one church had a number of ministers, each taking his proportion of work, could preach only occasionally; and surely an occasional sermon could not impose 'labour to fatigue.' 'What would have been the use,' I formerly asked in my treatise on the Ruling Eldership, 'of so many stated instructors? Had they been all ministers of the word, and had twelve, or six, or so few as three of them, been placed over a handful of people, how would they have found room for the exercise of their gifts? There would have been here such a waste of means as we nowhere find in a divine administration. Our Independent brethren allow of no elders but teaching elders; and what is the consequence? With very few exceptions, each of their

* Congreg. Indep., p. 178. † Page 226.
‡ Eccles. Polity, p. 357.

churches has but one elder, where each of the primitive churches had a council of them. A fact of this kind is very significant, and deserves to be well pondered. Each of our Presbyterian churches has a number of elders; each of the primitive churches had a number of elders; but our Independent friends, who plead so earnestly for scriptural institutions, have in this departed from apostolic precedent, and, even in the case of their largest churches, have substituted one elder for a college of them. . . . Should they not doubt their interpretation of scripture, when it brings them into collision with scriptural facts? Should they not reason with themselves: one teaching elder suffices for a large congregation; therefore they cannot have been all teaching elders of whom the apostles assigned certainly more than one, and likely a considerable number, to the most diminutive of christian assemblies?'

Dr Wardlaw, having quoted this passage, says, 'We "suffer the words of exhortation." We make no pretensions to infallibility. Nor are we less liable than our neighbours to fall into inconsistencies.' * Elsewhere Dr Wardlaw says, 'The inconsistency of any body of men with their own principles, is but a pitiful proof against the principles themselves.' † I grant that persons may have good principles and not practise them, and that the erring practice is no valid argument against the good principles. But Dr Wardlaw himself argues, page 89, from inconsistency

* Congreg. Indep., p. 221. † Page 210.

as indicating the lessons of experience. And if numerous churches, independent of each other, and all venerating scripture, take up a principle that leads them all away from universal primitive usage, there is room to suspect that a principle found to be unworkable is not scriptural, and that it is not the practice so much as the principle that is in fault. I am not urging any personal charge of inconsistency against our Independent brethren, but only asking them to consider of what their experience is suggestive. If the notion of all elders being public teachers throws them on a system of eldership so arduous and unworkable that a plurality, which in the beginning was always attained, is now almost never attained, surely this result sheds doubt on the hypothesis, and creates a presumption that the primitive churches had that system of teaching and ruling elders which prevails with us, and which is still found equally practicable as was a collegiate eldership in the first century.

The passage of my volume on the Eldership which I have just mentioned as quoted and commented on by Dr Wardlaw, is attacked with much vehemence by Dr Davidson.* He is quite indignant at the idea of one public teacher being considered sufficient for any church. Since I was speaking of Independent practice, and of what it indicated, his anger at me falls really on his party.

What says Dr Wardlaw on the subject? 'I have been amused,' he observes, 'sometimes at certain

* Eccles. Polity, p. 359.

churches pluming themselves on their strict conformity to apostolic practice in having their plurality of elders—and teaching elders too—while the plurality is the one concern, not the amount of actual efficiency with which the ends of the office are answered; for it has just been a plurality, and no more; and the two composing that plurality, instead of giving themselves wholly to the duties of their ministry, have had their mind and their time occupied, from Monday to Saturday, with the engagements of their secular calling. With how much greater effectiveness are the ends of the office likely to be served by the undivided labours of one devoted pastor, than by the limited and necessarily distracted attendance upon their official functions that can be given by any two whatever, so circumstanced!'* By such representations, Dr Wardlaw convinces me that two public teachers are not needed for one moderately-sized church, and leads me to infer that a large proportion of the primitive elders must have been ruling elders, since I cannot suppose the apostles to have provided numerous instructors, so clearly shown by Dr Wardlaw to be supernumerary. If a single church has many pastors, the utmost that can be expected is that one of them, or two of them, will be adequately educated and tolerably supported; and under such circumstances, the uneducated elders will soon shrink from unequal competition, and leave the higher services to superior qualifications. In other words, the

* Congreg. Indep., p. 225.

many elders will be such as we have—some of them thinking it enough to rule well, while others will labour in the word and doctrine. On these grounds, I feel warranted in saying with confidence, that Drs Wardlaw and Davidson, unless they are to part with an educated ministry altogether, cannot give effect to their own principles without passing into our practice; and that when they shall have persuaded the Congregationalist churches to act on their acknowledgment, that a plurality of elders is the rule of scripture, they will assimilate our religious denominations, and will prove the most successful christian unionists in these honoured days of love and brotherhood.

But Dr Davidson formally disproves the office of ruling elder, and I may seem to do him injustice, unless I meet the objections which he sets in array against it. 'The following considerations,' he says, 'disprove the office of lay eldership:—1. It implies that a distinction between the laity and clergy was made in the apostolic period.' In my treatise on the Eldership, which Dr Davidson honours with his strictures, I disclaimed the advocacy of lay eldership. It is a spiritual eldership for which I plead. Will Dr Davidson maintain that in the apostolic period no distinction was made between unofficial church members and their spiritual office-bearers? Unless he do so, his first objection is wholly nugatory. '2. Elders,' he says, 'is the appropriated appellation of bishop in other places of the New Testament. It is therefore agreeable to usage to understand it of bishops alone in the present text.' I admit that all elders were

bishops in the primitive churches; for these words, elder and bishop, are used interchangeably in the New Testament. On the other hand, Dr Davidson admits that all bishops were not in fact public teachers, and had not the requisite 'talents' for such occupation. 'Some elders,' he assures us, 'ruled, while others preached. That is a position too manifest to be called in question. Other parts of the New Testament would warrant that conclusion, had the text in the epistle to Timothy been wanting.' I am perfectly willing that all elders be called and considered bishops, while the distinction of teaching and ruling bishops is admitted also, and declared too manifest to be called in question. If it be still said that the distinction was practical, and not official, I still reply, that I esteem it a great matter to have the practice of the primitive churches, and that I am disposed, moreover, to regard primitive practice as expository of primitive principles, and to believe that elders who only ruled, and who were qualified only to rule, had only ruling assigned them in their appointment. '3. Stated and ordinary bishops,' says Dr Davidson, 'are elsewhere said to rule.' I admit that all elders should rule. The question is, whether some should confine themselves to ruling; and that question is not touched in this third objection. '4. Double honour, of which the elders who rule well are counted worthy, must mean double maintenance, as the succeeding context shows. But in no passage of scripture do we find the least intimation or command towards contributing to the temporal support of an order of men who do not

teach or preach in public. Such contributions are due to pastors and bishops—to speaking, not to silent elders.' This is saying and unsaying to perfection. Of the elders for whom double honour or pay is claimed, Dr Davidson admits that 'some ruled, while others preached;' and yet he declares now that double honour was demanded for speaking elders only. We have Dr Davidson's admission, that some elders had not aptitude for teaching, and were wise enough not to attempt things too high for them. Were these elders, if they ruled faithfully, to be denied compensation? No, says Paul, as Dr Davidson understands him; let those elders ruling well be amply recompensed. '5. In enumerating the qualifications of elders, the apostle Paul says of all, without exception or distinction, that they should be apt to teach, (διδακτικον.) But if some had no concern in teaching, this qualification was absolutely worthless.' In thus expressing himself, Dr Davidson has not a little the appearance of taking the apostle to task for appointing men to be elders who had not the requisite 'talents' for teaching, and then saying of them all, without exception or distinction, that they *should be apt to teach.* Some of them, by Dr Davidson's admission, were inapt teachers from natural defect. Why, if they should have been apt, did Paul appoint them, knowing their inaptitude? When Dr Davidson acknowledges that some taught publicly, and some did not, he is equally concerned as I am to understand that aptness for teaching, which is demanded of all elders *in a varied sense*, as applying

either to public instruction or to those more private modes of teaching which are scarcely less important than pulpit teaching itself. I now leave the reader to judge whether Dr Davidson is warranted in saying, 'These arguments (which have just been answered) are sufficient to overthrow the hypothesis of ruling elders.' His objections cannot be brought into harmony with each other, without admitting everything essential to my position. Certainly they have little weight against his acknowledgments, that Paul, in his epistles to Timothy and elsewhere, plainly distinguishes between elders who only ruled, and elders who both ruled and taught; that the primitive churches had elders whose functions were exhausted by ruling and governing, and that with these elders were associated preaching presbyters in the same college, session, or consistory.

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## CHAPTER V.

*The distinction of Teaching and Ruling Elders has been very generally acknowledged by christian authors and christian denominations down to a recent period.*

HERE we naturally begin by appealing to the christian Fathers. As theologians, they are not entitled to the idolatrous deference with which they are sometimes regarded. But their testimony is occasionally of weight in relation to matters of fact; and all we seek to ascertain from them here, is whether there were such office-

bearers as ruling elders in the early christian church. The first witness I cite is Justin Martyr, whom I do not remember to have found adduced by other writers who defend the elder's office. Indeed, he has been quoted with confidence on the opposite side. That christian philosopher, who was converted about the year 132, and who suffered martyrdom about 163, has occasion, in his pleadings for the persecuted christians, to give repeated descriptions of their worship. A resolute opponent of the ruling eldership thus translates one of these passages: 'Upon that, which is called the day of the Sun, there is an assembling together of all of the respective cities, or residing in the country; and the recollections of the apostles [the gospels], and the writings of all the prophets are read, as long as time permits; when the reader has ceased, he who presides, ὁ προεστως by a discourse, δια λογου, admonishes and exhorts to the imitation of things that are good. We then all rise up together, and offer prayer, and as already mentioned, when the prayer is ended, bread is brought, and wine and water. And he *who has the first place*, ὁ προεστως, again prays and gives thanks, *according to his ability*, ὁση δυναμις αυτῳ, and the people add their approbation, saying, Amen. And a distribution and delivery of the things, upon which thanks have been given, are made to all, and sent to those who are absent, by the deacons.' He then speaks of the lifting of a collection for widows, orphans, prisoners, and strangers,—which is deposited παρα τῳ προεστωτι, '*with the president.*' This paragraph is introduced by the late Dr Wilson

of Philadelphia, as one of innumerable proofs, that ruling elders, in our sense of the terms, were unknown to the christian Fathers. He tells us, 'that Justin Martyr has here a second time described the officers of a christian church employed in the most solemn act of public worship, the eucharist; and again he has said, they were the προϊστως, *scil.* πρεσβυτερος, presiding elder and the deacons.' *

If the author's theory had been, that every church had one pastor and a number of deacons, the quotation would have appeared more to his purpose. But he maintains, 'that though one person presided, every presiding presbyter had his co-presbyters or bishops, for such existed in all the churches, and have appeared in those of Smyrna, of Philippi, Corinth, and Rome.' He agrees with us, then, that each church had a number of presbyters, and quotes a passage from Justin Martyr, which bears, that only one of these administered the word and sacraments. Surely this authority, instead of being against us, is wholly on our side. If, in the opinion of Dr Wilson, the elders had presided by turns, there would have been room for alleging, that now one conducted worship and now another, and that they were all public teachers. But he looks on the presidency as having been a permanent distinction, and tells us, that in the primitive ages 'it was accounted one characteristic of the orthodoxy of a church, that it could show a line of presiding presbyters or bishops from the days of

* Primitive Government of the Church, p. 19.

the apostles.'* The amount of this testimony therefore is, that each church had a company of elders, and that one of these presided at meetings of his brethren, and conducted the public worship of the Lord's-day.

This testimony of Justin Martyr is in every view highly important. He is a very early writer. He was a man of extensive and accurate information. He professedly described the condition and worship, not of a single congregation, but in general, of christian churches. And Dr Wilson admits, 'that when he wrote his two apologies for the christians which were within fifty years of John, there were only presbyters, whereof one in each church was the presiding presbyter, who administered the eucharist, and deacons, who carried it to the people.'† Dr Wilson should have said, that one in each church preached, prayed, and administered the eucharist; for in the passage quoted from Justin all these duties are equally ascribed to one functionary. Each church had then a number of elders, of whom one only conducted public worship. What evidence, not inspired, could be more decisive of the question at issue?

If it be said, that more than one elder certainly preached in some of the churches; the reply is easy, that some churches have two or more ministers still, and along with them a company of ruling elders. And even though it could be made good that presbyters in general began to preach after Justin's days,

* Prim. Gov. of the Church, p. 92. † Page 227.

we need not marvel that ambition should show itself in this class as in others—that ruling elders should become preachers, when preaching elders were becoming prelates, and deacons themselves were arrogating the functions of the holy ministry.

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who embraced christianity in 246, and suffered martyrdom in 258, has many distinct allusions to this class of office-bearers. His 29th epistle, for example, is addressed to the elders and deacons; and the manner in which he there speaks of the elders, has led his commentator, Bishop Fell, to remark, in a foot-note, that 'St Paul appears to have distinguished (1 Tim. v. 17) antiently between ruling elders and teachers.' *

Origen, who was born at Alexandria, A.D. 185, gives an account (Adv. Celsum, lib. iii. p. 142, edit. Cant.) of church discipline as administered in his age. Archbishop Potter, in his 'Discourse of Church Government,' chap. v., thus translates a portion of it: 'The christians try and examine as far as 'tis possible the very souls of those who desire to be their hearers; they first instruct them privately, and when they are found sufficiently disposed to lead a good life, they introduce them into a public assembly. Here they who have been but lately introduced, and have not received the symbol of purification (that is, baptism), are assigned to a different place from the rest,

* Epistola xxix. Cyprianus Presbyteris et Diaconibus Fratribus, Salutem. [Aut modo cum Presbyteris.] Inter Presbyteros, Rectores, et Doctores, olim distinxisse videtur Divus Paulus, Epist. 1 ad Tim. c. iv. 17. (A misprint for v. 17.)—Bremæ, M DC XC.

who have already given full proof of their sincere resolution to addict themselves wholly to the christian doctrine and way of life. Some of these latter are ordained to inquire into the lives and conversations of those who present themselves to be admitted, in order to prohibit infamous and vile persons from coming into their assembly.'

It will be observed, from this passage, that of the christians who were fully proved, some were ordained to inquire into the lives and conversations of applicants for admission. What could be said more characteristic of the position and functions of our ruling elders?

Hilary, deacon of the Church of Rome, who wrote in the fourth century, and whose writings are found at present among the works of Ambrose, tells us, in his comments on this chapter, that 'the synagogues, and afterwards the church, had elders, without whose counsel nothing was transacted in the church: By what negligence it fell into disuse I know not, unless, perhaps, by the indolence, or rather by the pride, of the teachers, while they alone wished to appear something.' * Here the counselling and teaching office-bearers are clearly distinguished, the antiquity of ruling elder is explicitly asserted; and while the office is represented as falling into disuse, the writer

* Synagoga et postea ecclesia seniores habuit quorum sine consilio nihil agebatur in ecclesia. Quod qua negligentia obsoleverit nescio, nisi forte doctorum desidia aut magis superbia, dum soli volunt aliquid videri.'—(Commentaria Sancti Ambrosii, 1 Tim. v. 1.)

ascribes the suppression of it to indolent or tyrannical bishops, who wished to rest or reign undisturbed by associates. Some have tried to torture the words of Hilary into another meaning, but their testimony to a ruling eldership has been owned by eminent men of all parties — by Bucer, Peter Martyr, Calvin, Whitgift, Zanchius, etc. etc.

Augustin, in the fourth century, makes frequent mention of this class of officers—to the extent, at least, of showing that he and many other pastors had elders who did not preach associated with them in the superintendence of their flocks.

Regarding the testimonies of some of these Fathers, as formerly cited by me, Dr Davidson says, 'Surely if Dr King had known the thorough examination to which these quotations [from Cyprian, Origen, and Hilary] have been subjected by Rothe and Neander, he would have allowed them to sleep undisturbed, rather than affix interpretations to them which they refuse to bear.'

Dr Davidson has not adduced the reasoning of Rothe and Neander on which he lays so much stress, and I am not bound to answer a pointless reference. I may remind the reader, however, that Neander believed elders to have been appointed, in the first instance, *specifically to rule*. He says, 'They were originally chosen as in the synagogue, not so much for the instruction and edification of the church, as for taking the lead in its general management.' *

* Planting of the Christian Church, p. 42.

Dr Davidson quotes with approbation his saying, that 'ruling and governing evidently exhaust what belonged from the beginning to the office of presbyter or bishop, and for which it was originally instituted.' When there were elders who only ruled, were there no ruling elders? Surely there must have been, for elders who only ruled could be nothing else than ruling elders; and by the united testimony of Neander and Dr Davidson this state of things existed from the beginning.

For the legitimacy of the appeal to Cyprian, I have cited the acknowledgment of Bishop Fell; for that to Origen, I have given the translation of Archbishop Potter; for the view taken of Hilary's words, I have pleaded the sanction of such men as Peter Martyr, who was Professor of Divinity at Oxford, and Canon of Christ's Church. The concurrence of such men in an interpretation of the Fathers favourable to Presbytery will not be considered either interested or insignificant. But suppose that scripture and the Fathers were alike to fail us, it would still be extraordinary that Dr Davidson could speak of Calvin as inventing the ruling elder's office.

The churches of the Waldenses had ruling elders, when sound doctrine and pure discipline, banished from the world besides, took refuge in their valleys and fastnesses during the Dark Ages. This fact is abundantly proved in Blair's history of that interesting people. 'To another book of authority,' he says, 'we must pay particular attention, which is entitled, "The Ancient Discipline of the Evangelical Churches

in the Valleys of Piemont." . . . No writer mentions any copy as dated earlier than 1120.' * This book of Discipline, as contained in Mr Blair's appendix, has one article concerning pastors, and a distinct article concerning elders. Of the latter it says, 'Rulers and elders are chosen out of the people, according to the diversity of the work in the unity of Christ.' In a separate article on excommunication, it says, 'But in case all these chastisements produce no amendment of life, nor forbearance of evils, Christ himself teacheth us how we ought to proceed against such an one: if he hear not those, tell it to the church; that is, to the rulers by whom the church is governed and conserved.' † In relation to those passages, Mr Blair remarks, 'They had three orders of men above their ordinary members: the bishop, or teaching elder; the lay elder; and the deacon. The existence of the second class is clearly expressed in article 4th of the foregoing Discipline, for they are called rulers and elders chosen out of the people.' ‡

At the time of the Reformation, when the church cast off the accumulated abuses of many centuries, and re-appeared in all the loveliness of its primitive simplicity, the creeds and confessions of almost all reformed countries emphatically avowed the divine appointment of this office, and exhibited, in vivid lights, its high importance to the prosperity of Christ's kingdom. It was thus owned by the reformed churches

* History of the Waldenses, by the Rev. Adam Blair, vol. i., book ii., chap. 1: Twelfth century.

† Vol. i., pp. 534–536. ‡ Vol. i., p. 540.

of Switzerland, Poland, Germany, Holland, Belgium, and France. Even the Church of England is no exception. The same convocation which passed the Thirty-nine Articles, sanctioned a Catechism drawn up by the Rev. Dean Nowell, in which the maintenance of discipline by a ruling eldership is unequivocally advocated.

In the concluding part of Mr Nowell's Catechism, the following answer is given as to the best means of remedying impure communion: 'In well-constituted and well-regulated churches, a certain plan and order of government, as I have already said, was instituted and observed. Elders were chosen, that is, ecclesiastical rulers, in order to maintain and conduct ecclesiastical discipline. To these belonged authority, reprimand, and chastisement by censure. These, with the co-operation of the pastor, if they knew any who, by false opinions, or turbulent errors, or silly superstitions, or a vicious and profligate life, brought publicly a great reproach on the church of God, and could not, without profanation, approach the Lord's supper, repelled and rejected such from communion, and would not again admit them till they had satisfied the church by public penitence.'* In support

* In ecclesiis bene, institutis atque moratis, certa, ut antea dixi, ratio atque ordo gubernationis instituebatur atque observabatur. Deligebantur seniores, id est magistratus ecclesiastici, qui disciplinam ecclesiasticam tenerent atque colerent. Ad hos authoritas, animadversio, atque castigatio censoria pertinebant: hi, adhibito etiam pastore, si quos esse cognoverant qui, vel opinionibus falsis, vel turbulentis erroribus, vel anilibus superstitionibus, vel vita

of these views, we are referred, in the margin, to a number of texts, and among these, to 1 Tim. v. 17.

Respecting this publication, Bishop Randolph says, in the preface to the first edition of his Enchiridion, 'It is another object of the present plan, to show the genuine sense of the Church of England, in her earliest days, both as to the grounds of separation from the Church of Rome, and the doctrines which, after a long struggle, having entirely emancipated herself from that yoke, she at length finally adopted and ratified. For this purpose, my choice has been principally directed to such works as had the sanction of public authority, and which may therefore be relied on as containing the final and decided opinions of our reformers, approved of in the general by the church at large. . . . Of this kind, (that is, thus publicly received), were "Jewell's Apology," and "Nowell's Catechism," the former of which is said to have been published with the consent of the bishops, and was always understood to speak the sense of the whole church, in whose name it is written; the latter had the express sanction of convocation.'

Since these, then, were the principles of the English Church, why were they not carried into effect? Bishop Burnet lets us into the secret. He informs us,

vitiosa flagitiosaque, magnam publice offensionem ecclesiæ Dei adferrent, quique sine cœnæ Dominicæ profanatione accedere non possent, eos a communione repellebant atque rejiciebant, neque rursum admittebant, donec pœnitentia publica ecclesiæ satisfecissent.—(Noelli Catechismus, contained in the 'Enchiridion Theologicum' of Bishop Randolph.)

in the preface to the second part of his 'History of the Reformation,' that 'there were many learned and pious divines in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, who, being driven beyond sea, had observed the new models set up in Geneva, and other places, for the censuring of scandalous persons, of mixed judicatories of the ministers and laity; and these, reflecting on the great looseness of life which had been universally complained of in King Edward's time, thought such a platform might be an effectual way for keeping out a return of the like disorders.' Then we are told of certain statesmen who demonstrated to the Queen, 'that these models would certainly bring with them a great abatement of her prerogative, since, if the concerns of religion came into popular hands, there would be a power set up distinct from hers, over which she could have no authority. This she perceived well; and therefore resolved to maintain the ancient government of the church.'

The present churchwardens appear to be the wreck of this scriptural order of functionaries. In their annual attendance on the visitations of the archdeacon, they swear that they will present to that dignitary the names of all parishioners who are notoriously immoral.* The oath has become a dead letter; but, though inoperative at present, it may be deemed commemorative of past realities.

The earlier Congregational churches also had their elders. This was general in America. The earlier

* Tracts for the Times, 59, quoted in the Plea of Presbytery, p. 164—a work which contains much valuable information.

Independents of New England were English Puritans, who sought refuge on a foreign soil from the convulsions and persecutions of their native country. For a considerable period, the only work on church government at all acknowledged by them as an exposition of their polity, was John Cotton's well-known 'Book of the Keys.' This author assigns the government of the church to elders, while he concedes certain privileges to the brethren or private members; and he also asserts 'the necessary communion of churches in synods,' in order to rectify maladministration. 'But it was convenient (says Mr C. Mather) the churches of New England should have a system of their discipline extracted from the word of God, and exhibited to them with a more effectual acknowledged and established recommendation.' With this view, a bill was presented to the 'general court' in the year 1646, for the calling of a synod, to prepare a directory of government.

The synod met at Cambridge (New England), and produced the famous 'Cambridge Platform of Church Discipline.' When this work was finished, 'the synod broke up with singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation.'

The Platform was presented by the synod to the general court which convened it, in 1648; and more than thirty years afterwards, it was unanimously approved of by a synod of all the churches in the colony, assembled at Boston. What, then, is the teaching of this important and venerable document on the question at issue?

Its seventh chapter treats 'of ruling elders and deacons. The ruling elder's office,' we are there told, 'is distinct from the office of pastor and teacher: the ruling elders are not so called to exclude the pastors and teachers from ruling, because ruling and governing is common to those with the other: whereas, attending to teach and preach the word is peculiar unto the former. The ruling elder's work is to join with the pastor and teacher in those acts of spiritual rule which are distinct from the ministry of the word and sacraments.' Then follows a very excellent summary of the duties of elders.

The Independents of England witnessed in times past to the same principle. Neal tells us, that 'to inform the world of the real principles of the Puritans of those times, the Rev. Mr Bradshaw published a treatise, entitled, "English Puritanism, containing the main opinions of the rigidest sort of those that went by that name in the realm of England," which the learned Dr Ames translated into Latin, for the benefit of foreigners.' *

I have the tract itself before me, and shall adduce its testimony in its own words. In chap. iii., the Independents of those days are alleged to 'hold that the pastors, teachers, and ruling elders of particular congregations are, or ought to be, the highest spirituall officers in the church.' The fourth chapter purports to be 'concerning the elders,' and its opening section is as follows: 'Forasmuch as, through the

* History of the Puritans, part ii. chap. i., p. 449—4th edit.

malice of Sathan, there are, and will be, in the best churches, many disorders and scandles committed that redound to the reproach of the Gospel, and are a stumbling-block to many both without and within the church, and sith they judge it repugnant to the word of God that any minister should be a sole ruler, and, as it were, *a pope*, so much as in one parish, much more that he should be one over a whole diocese, province, or nation, they hold, that by God's ordinance, the congregation should make choice of other officers, as assistants unto the ministers in the spirituall regiment of the congregation, who are by office, jointly with the ministers of the word, to be as monitors and overseers of the manners and conversation of all the congregation, and one of another, that so every one may be more wary of their wayes, and that the pastors and doctors may better attend to prayer and doctrine, and by their means may be made better acquainted with the estate of the people, when other eyes besides their own shall wake and watch over them.'

The celebrated Dr Owen, one of the brightest ornaments of Independency, has a strong passage on 1 Tim. v. 17, in his 'True Nature of a Gospel Church,' where he chastises objectors to the office of ruling elder with a zealous severity. After copying the pithy paragraphs, I have erased them, to give another passage, quite as persuasive in itself, from another of his works which is less known. In his treatise on 'Worship and Discipline, by way of Question and Answer,' he says, '*Question* 31: Are there appointed

any elders in the church, whose office and duty consist in rule and government only? *Answer:* Elders not called to teach ordinarily or administer the sacraments, but to assist and help in the rule and government of the church, are mentioned in the scripture, (Rom. xii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28; 1 Tim. v. 17.) . . . The words of the apostle to this purpose are express, (1 Tim. v. 17,) "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine." For the words expressly assign two sorts of elders, whereof some only attend unto rule; others, moreover, labour in the word and doctrine. And besides, what is thus expressly spoken concerning the appointment of this sort of elders in the church, their usefulness, in the necessity of their work and employment, is evident. For whereas a constant care in the church, that the conversation of all the members of it be such as becometh the gospel, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be not evil spoken of, is of great concernment and importance; and the pastors and teachers, being to give up themselves continually unto prayer and the ministry of the word, cannot attend unto the constant and daily oversight thereof, the usefulness of these elders, whose proper and peculiar work it is to have regard unto the holy walking of the church, must needs be manifest unto all. But whereas, in most churches there is little or no regard unto the personal holiness of the members of them, it is no wonder that no account should be had of them who are ordained by the Lord Christ to look after it and promote it.'

Dr Doddridge, another eminent Congregationalist, says, in commenting on 1 Tim. v. 17, ['especially they who labour,'] 'This seems to insinuate that there were some who, though they presided in the church, were not employed in preaching.'

Dr Dwight, whom Mr Orme, himself an Independent, characterises as a distinguished American divine of the Congregational order, thus writes in his 'System of Theology,' (vol. v. p. 171,) 'Preaching is everywhere in the scriptures exhibited as an employment superior to that of ruling. In the passage quoted from 1 Tim. v. 17, this truth is decisively exhibited. Here St Paul directs that preaching elders should be accounted worthy of more honour than ruling elders.'

Later writers of the Episcopalian and Independent persuasions have become more chary of eulogising the ruling elder's office, as considering it a constituent of presbytery, antagonist to their systems. Occasional admissions of the same character, however, are still to be met with in modern publications.

'In two passages,' says the late Dr Arnold, (Gal. vi. 6, and 1 Tim. v. 17,) 'he asserts the claim of the governors of the church to be maintained by the church. In the first, indeed, he speaks only of such governors of the church as are instructors: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things;"—but, in the second passage, while he acknowledges the especial claim of such, he extends the right to all rulers of the church generally, whatever may be their particular functions: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of

double honour."'* We are told, in this paragraph, that Gal. vi. 6 speaks only of such governors as are instructors, and thus far differs from 1 Tim. v. 17, which treats of rulers generally, including those who are not instructors: in other words, the distinction is acknowledged of ruling and teaching elders.

Archbishop Whately says—'The plan pursued by the apostles seems to have been to establish a great number of small, (in comparison with most modern churches,) distinct, and independent communities, each governed by its own single bishop, consulting, no doubt, with his own presbyters, and accustomed to act in concurrence with them,' etc.† As to the mutual dependence, or independence, of christian communities, I am not now called particularly to speak: but here is a distinct admission on the subject in hand, that, on the plan of the apostles, every bishop or pastor consulted his elders as Presbyterian ministers do, and acted in concert with them.

A powerful lay petition has been recently presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury. It recommends that the clergy be increased in number: but that is not the only burden of its prayer. 'Secondly,' it says, 'provision must be made for a more systematic employment of laymen in the exercise of functions which do not belong exclusively to the clergy.' It urges the propriety of 'sanctioning and encouraging the employment of a class of laymen, who, without altogether abandoning their worldly callings, might be set apart,

* Fragment on the Church, by Thomas Arnold, D.D., chap. ii. p. 25.

† Kingdom of Christ, p. 165.

under episcopal authority, to act as visitors of the sick, scripture readers, catechists, and the like, in parishes where their introduction should be approved of by the parochial clergy.'

'The system of district visiting,' say the petitioners, 'and the appointment of lay scripture readers under clerical superintendence, have already been adopted, we believe, with much success, in many populous parishes; but the present state of society requires that both these means of usefulness should be greatly extended, and brought into more immediate connexion with our ecclesiastical arrangements; for we are fully persuaded that the true strength of our church can never be completely known until, by some such means, her lay members are enabled, under direct sanction and control, to take part in the discharge of all those offices which are not, by her constitution, restricted to the three orders of the ministry.'

The idea of organic change being contemplated in this improvement, is emphatically disclaimed in the following terms:—'In venturing to urge upon your Grace the adoption of these measures, which would supply a link much needed between parochial clergy and the community at large, we are far from desiring to make any innovation in our ecclesiastical policy. We only seek to restore to full vigour and efficiency one of the orders in our church, and to promote the appointment of officers already recognised by ecclesiastical authority, and for which, at no period since the Reformation, has the position of the church more imperatively called.'

These are the admissions of modern Episcopalians. Our Congregationalist brethren occasionally favour us with kindred acknowledgments. In a discourse preached at the setting apart of the Rev. John Reynolds, quoted in an able sermon on the presbyterian eldership, by the late Dr Stewart of Liverpool, the late Dr Bogue says: 'Congregational churches, in general, employ deacons to perform in part the office of the elders who were ordained by apostolic authority to rule. Presbytery here comes nearest to the primitive pattern, though some difference still remains. Besides the pastor, it has both ruling elders and deacons.' 'To speak,' says Dr Vaughan, 'of one man as being the pastor of a church, including from six to eight hundred members, and of a congregation making much more than double that number of persons, is assuredly preposterous. The pastoral duty of such a minister must necessarily be left in much, very much, the greater part undone, and be devolved, if performed in any shape, on a number of deacons, when they become co-pastors in every respect, except that they may not be preachers.'* Dr Vaughan would prefer a plurality of ministers, but he admits that deacons, as a matter of fact, become in the larger churches co-pastors in every respect, except that they are not preachers —in other words, they are ruling elders. Let them be called what they are, and have all the advantage of knowing expressly their duties, and being solemnly ordained to the discharge of them, and the consequent

* Congregationalism, p. 189.

benefits will be such that Dr Vaughan may be led to admire the theory of a ruling eldership, of which he has confessedly got the practice.

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## CHAPTER VI.

*Benefits which would result to Independent Churches, and to the Methodist Connexion, from instituting a Ruling Eldership.*

On the grounds which have been stated, I conclude that it is the duty of every church to have a company of ruling elders. Congregationalist churches, by adopting this polity, would gain these great and obvious benefits:—

*First*, Ministers of the word, when associated in the government of the church with elders who do not preach, would have a shared, and consequently diminished, responsibility. Congregationalists admit that elders are specially entrusted with ruling; but when, as with them, there is only one elder who both rules and teaches, this special trust, in resting upon one individual, cannot fail, more particularly in critical junctures, to be disquieting and oppressive. Besides, if the course pursued by the minister give dissatisfaction, all the odium recoils on himself, and he is placed personally in a false position with the people of his charge. Hence alienations, and too frequently separations, result from such feuds. The case is totally different when the minister, finding a difficulty in superintendence thrown in his way,

consigns the removal of it to the session. There he is one of many. What is done is not his act individually or prominently; and the people, so far from being disposed to accumulate blame on his head, are glad, so far as possible, to hold him excused, and to censure his confederates; for churches like to think well of their teachers, and take any alternative that offers itself rather than quarrel with the hand that dispenses the bread of life.

The elders of a church, being associated with the minister in important work and by the most sacred ties, become emphatically his friends; and as they are usually men of influence, they diffuse their own feelings of attachment throughout a congregation; and hence the pastor becomes more and more endeared to his flock, so that a severance of their relation is felt to be very painful, and in a country where the system of eldership is in healthful operation, seldom occurs. It is happily a rare thing in Scotland to hear of a minister demitting his charge: I am afraid that the same remark is not applicable to Congregationalism in England.

*Secondly*, The sessional system would secure for Congregationalist churches a more thorough superintendence. Deacons so far do the work of elders; but when that work devolves on parties to whom it has not been professedly committed, and who have besides their proper and distinctive duties, it is then but partially and irregularly discharged.

To compensate for this felt deficiency, some churches of the Independents appoint Committees of Discipline

and Committees of Visitation. But these are sorry substitutes for scriptural office-bearers. If an individual come into a house to counsel or reprove some member of the family in a case of delicacy where words need weight to give them persuasiveness, what force will there be in the announcement—'I appear here as one of a Committee?' Widely different is the effect when an individual, clothed with an office of Christ's appointment, interposes to plead His cause and enforce His commandments. There is something dreadfully wrong where the suggestions of such an adviser are refused deference and consideration.

Elders who do their duty are not only respected but beloved by the people; and hence they form a bond of connexion between worshippers themselves, by which many a church has been held together and brought safely through difficulties when there was no stated pastor, or the condition of the pastorate tended to dispersion and ruin. If at the present time all the Independent churches of England had companies of elders, and each elder visited half-yearly a section of the christian people assigned to his more immediate charge, we should hear less of the conquests effected by the searching proselytising zeal of Popery and Puseyism.

*Thirdly*, The adoption of a sessional system by the Independent churches of England would have a tendency to retain in their communion persons of superior endowments. They who are qualified to be useful would not then need to join such sects as that of the Plymouth Brethren to find room for

the exercise of their gifts. It is true that deacons take a spiritual charge; but their avowed business is the serving of tables, and extraneous and unacknowledged functions are always executed at disadvantage. It is true also that committees may help the pastor, and make amends to some extent for his lack of service; but this expedient has no aspect of scriptural warrant, and rather acknowledges a void than fills it effectively. The church should surely have offices bearing the stamp of New Testament sanction, which will give to competent persons all facilities for usefulness, without rendering them liable to the charge of irregularity or assumption. The institution of a ruling eldership plainly opens such a channel for the free development and action of beneficence. Presbyterial churches are so desirous to have well-qualified elders, that whenever an individual evinces qualifications for superintendence, and is of consistent character, his difficulty is to avoid the office rather than to obtain it; and I have no doubt that this fact presents in part the reason why the Plymouthist system is almost unknown in Scotland.

*Fourthly*, The adoption of a sessional system tends to the conservation of sound doctrine in churches. Elders find it necessary, for their character and for the comfortable performance of their work, to be familiar with scripture and with the best known evangelical treatises. They are not engaged in erudite speculations which, in exercising reason, are easily perverted to foster its pride and turn it away from fundamental truths and practical godliness. That reading which

suits their functions best is that which is fullest of Christ—that which with least artifice and eloquence feeds the soul, and which, above all, supplies a word in season for a death-bed. For such a class of men rationalism has few charms, and German neology will penetrate with difficulty into any church of which the views and spirit bear the impress of their oversight.

*Fifthly*, The adoption of a sessional system by churches devoid of it, would lead gradually and guardedly to other improvements. Few will deny that amendments are called for, even in religious denominations the most exemplary and useful, to meet the exigencies of the times. The Independent English churches, in a season of trial, are, by their own confession, not manifesting all that unity or power which are essential to progress and victory. But changes are hazardous, and we are tempted to bear with existing evils rather than encounter the peradventures of innovation. In the multitude of counsellors there is safety; and in no case is this maxim more applicable than to a body of men chosen to office because of their sound judgment and excellent christian character, and interested alike in the honour of their minister and the prosperity of the flock. If every Nonconformist society of christians had its assembly of freely chosen elders, materials now loose within these societies would come to be cemented, and this internal consolidation would favour a stability of mutual support between churches; and the charges of incoherency and feebleness brought against Nonconformity, both by its friends and foes,

would be speedily refuted by the mighty acts of an aggregated and ever-gathering strength. And why should not Independent churches have each its consessus of elders in our days as in former times? That every church should have a plurality of presbyters, is on all hands admitted; and that single admission, fully acted on, would work a reformation, and bring us towards agreement. But we have other elements in common. Dr Davidson admits and contends, that of the primitive elders some ruled only, while others ruled and taught. He does not think that eventually this was a difference of principle, but he argues strenuously that the difference existed. Both he and Dr Wardlaw think that the payment of elders may occasionally be dispensed with.* They both think that there may be a president among the elders, or, as we should say, a moderator of session;† and the Rev. Dr Halley‡ and the Rev. John Kelly§ have expressed the same sentiment. The only remaining point of difference respects the sort of ordination elders should have. Is it to be the same for all elders, whether they rule only or teach also? I have reasoned that it is most scriptural and reasonable to ordain men only to those functions which they are actually to discharge. BUT I SHALL CONSIDER THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN US VERY SMALL IF ONE GENERAL FORM OF ORDINATION IS ALLOWED TO INTRODUCE

* Eccles. Polity, p. 369; Congreg. Indep., p. 223.
† Eccles. Polity, p. 38; Congreg. Indep., pp. 174, 175.
‡ Congreg. Lect., p. 63.
§ Speech reported in the *British Banner*, Oct. 22, 1852.

AN ADEQUATE NUMBER OF LABOURERS, AND SUCH A DISTRIBUTION OF THEIR WORK AS WILL SECURE TO THE CHURCH THE VARIED BENEFIT OF DIFFERENT GIFTS—THE GUIDANCE OF THE WISE AND THE PRELECTIONS OF THE ELOQUENT.

A ruling eldership is nowhere more needed than in the Methodist Connexion. The Wesleyans have done a great work. They have directed their efforts to the necessitous in every clime; and whether we mark their progress in Great Britain, or on the Continent, or among the heathen, it is everywhere radiant with the inscription, 'Unto the poor the gospel is preached.' Deeply calamitous would it be for the interests of our common christianity, if a denomination of christians so energetic and useful should be arrested or enfeebled in its course. But the divisions now existing in its ranks are formidable, especially when viewed in relation to their cause—a dislike of exclusive and irresponsible pastoral power. 'Liberty,' says Bunsen, 'is inseparable from abuse, and therefore from scandal: the political history of the politically freest nation in the world is the best proof of that. But men and christians ought not to be frightened by such abuse and such scandal into a betrayal of the sacred cause of liberty and truth.' The same writer observes, that, 'in all congregational and ecclesiastical institutions, christian freedom, within limits conformable to scripture, constitutes the first requisite for a vital restoration.' * These words should have more

* See Hippolytus and his Age, vol. i. Pref. xix., and vol. iii. Introd. xv.

weight, as coming from a distinguished foreigner,* whose country is less favoured than our own with free institutions. The British mind is averse to despotism, and most of all to clerical despotism; and a religious party regarded as wearing this badge, and refusing, when entreated by thousands of its members to popularise more liberally than the Wesleyan Connexion has done its administration, must henceforth contend with extraordinary difficulties. The eminent talent, piety, and services of such men as Dr Bunting, may do much, very much, for any cause favoured with them; but in these latitudes it is hard for any men, however good and great, to pilot and impel a vessel against the current of public opinion. I have endeavoured to show that the scriptures do not assign to ministers of the word this odious position; and if the case be so, we are not at liberty to brave popular disapproval founded in scriptural conviction. A ruling eldership is the cure; and if the denomination contain any number of men approaching in excellence to some of its members with whom I have the happiness to be acquainted, their admission into Conference would be an accession of strength to all holy influences, and would promise to the Connexion a brightening future, by which the lustre even of its own past history would be surpassed and eclipsed.

* 'The distinguished representative of the sovereign of a great kingdom, a zealous and influential member of the Evangelical Church of Germany, who for nearly twenty years was the King of Prussia's minister and plenipotentiary at Rome, and has subsequently held the same responsible office for more than twelve in London.'—*Edinburgh Review*, Jan., 1853, Art. i.

# PART V.

## ON THE SUBORDINATION OF PRESBYTERS TO PRELATES; OR, DIOCESAN EPISCOPACY.

### CHAPTER I.

*High ground taken by a portion of Episcopal writers—Importance attached by them to Apostolical Succession—Consequences of the doctrine—The Episcopal form of government might be the best, independently of the doctrine of Succession.*

MANY Episcopal writers take high ground in defending their church order. In their view, ministers not episcopally ordained are mere laymen. And without a regular ministry, there can be no valid administration of ordinances—no true church—no covenanted mercy. Some of them, in very plain terms, represent an Episcopal administration of the means of grace as not only essential to good order, but as in all ordinary circumstances indispensable to salvation. The famous Dodwell, in a work full of anathemas against schism, supposes himself to evince no schismatic spirit in declaring of every dissenter from Episcopal communion, that, from 'being disunited from the church, he loses his union with Christ, and all the mystical benefits consequent to that union. He has thenceforward no title to the sufferings or merits or intercessions of Christ, or any of those other blessings which were purchased by those

merits, or which may be expected from those intercessions. He has no title to pardon of sin, to the gifts or assistances of the blessed Spirit, or to any promises of future rewards, though he should perform all other parts of his duty besides this of reuniting himself again to Christ's mystical body in a visible communion. Till then there are no promises of acceptance of any prayers, which either he may offer for himself, or others may offer for him. And how disconsolate must the condition be of such a person!'* When this writer and others undertake to prove that all persons who are not 'of the episcopal communion are guilty of the sin of schism,' † what do they mean by communion? Is it mere attendance at church? or is it rather, as they seem to think, the state into which parties are brought by baptism, episcopally administered? The New Testament allies communion more expressly with another sacrament: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' ‡ Of the millions who professedly belong to the Episcopal Church, comparatively few care to have communion in this scriptural sense of the expression. Should not such a fact awaken other sentiments than those of exclusiveness and intolerance? Should it not create a doubt whether the immense power of the church be a true index of devotional frame and spiritual prosperity?

* Separation of Churches, etc., Preface, p. xii. London. 1679.

† Ibid, p. xxv. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 16.

More recently, the celebrated Dr Newman, while Vicar of St Mary the Virgin's, Oxford, maintained, in a sermon which, under Church of England patronage, has been printed in different forms, and which has passed through successive editions, that no Dissenters are regenerated, and that 'regeneration is the peculiar and invisible gift of the church.' * He there expresses, however, the strange opinion, which he may since have retracted, that though we cannot have the new birth in our state of schism, yet 'men have, through God's blessing, obeyed, and pleased him without it,'—a species of comfort this, which it will be well for us neither to value nor to accept. Bishop Hobart, in his 'Companion for the Altar'—Meditation for Saturday Evening—has avowed, that 'where the gospel is proclaimed, communion with the church, by the participation of its ordinances at the hands of the duly-authorised priesthood, is the indispensable condition of salvation.' †

'The Right Reverend Bishop Doane,' in 'a Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of New Jersey in America,' delivered in May, 1842, and republished the same year in London, for the benefit of the English Church, placidly confounds 'the church of the apostles' with the church of their alleged successors, and says, 'It is through them whom He (Christ) instructed and appointed and commissioned to make all believers one with Him, in baptism, that the communion of the

* Parochial Sermons, vol. iii. Second Edition. London: Rivingtons.—As a Tract. London: J. Burns. 1841.

† See Dr Mason's 'Claims of Episcopacy Refuted,' chap i. p. 2.

mystical body on earth is formed and held with the divine and glorious Head in heaven. . . . It thus becomes a very serious question, whether they who are not "built on the foundation of the apostles" are "of the household of God;" whether they who have not been "added" *in the church* "to them" are "added to the Lord." Certainly there is no warrant for such a hope in all the Holy Scriptures. Certainly it finds no encouragement in all the writings which come down to us from the first days. It certainly would be out of harmony with all the dealings and with the whole providence of Him who doeth all things well. . . . Let none of us therefore count it an indifferent thing whether we are in the church or not,' etc.

The circumstance of belonging to an established church affords no refuge from these denunciations. All are dissenters who belong to state churches which are not episcopal. The Established clergy of Scotland are characterised by Dr Hicks, in the Preface to his 'Answer to the Rights of the Christian Church,' as 'a band of rebels;' 'the abomination of desolation in the house or kingdom of God;' 'not pastors, but wolves of the flock.' *

Nor is it enough, according to these parties, to adopt episcopal forms. 'Episcopacy,' says Mr Lawson, 'without the succession, is nothing, and differs in no respect from Presbyterianism; for it is the apostolically-derived succession which constitutes the

* See Introduction to Dr Mason on Episcopacy, by the Rev. J. Blackburn. London. 1838.

Episcopate.'* The same writer declares, that the prelacy which was introduced into the Scotch Church in 1572 by the Convention of Leith 'was more objectionable than Presbyterianism, because it was the mere shadow without the substance.'† Even a bishop would run without being sent, and would have no more authority than a lay preacher, if he did not derive his commission through a succession of bishops from the apostles. The Lutheran Church in Germany may be said to be episcopal in its structure. It has superintendents who so far fill the place of bishops. But that avails nothing. Luther was only a presbyter; and he, with others of like status, ordained their successors; and ordination by presbyters is nominal and worthless. The ordaining virtue is incommunicable, save by the hands of bishops who trace their appointment to apostles as predecessors.

And what if Luther could not have obtained office from such ordainers? Was the work of reformation to break down for want of this qualification in the reformer? To this query Bishop Onderdonk, who is more liberal than most advocates of Episcopacy, replies, 'We think it doubtful whether Luther and his associates, and Calvin and his associates, were prevented from obtaining episcopacy by difficulties strictly *insuperable*. It is well known to those acquainted with ecclesiastical history, that Novatian, a schismatic bishop, induced three obscure bishops to

* Hist. of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, from Reformation to Revolution, chap. iv. p. 112.

† Ibid, p. 110.

consecrate him: and among the multitude of papal bishops, could not those reformers have found three, elevated or obscure, to give them the succession, or else to join with them, and preside over their purified church? and this, without resorting to the culpable methods ascribed to Novatian?' * We are not prepared to acknowledge that the multitude of papal bishops are all lineal successors of the apostles. Where is the promise in the New Testament that the papal church, or any church, would have this uninterrupted succession? Where is the evidence that in times of darkness and confusion no irregular appointments have broken the continuity of the chain? Dr Alexander, in his 'Observations on Apostolical Succession,' has well asked, 'What should we think of a man who should claim a dormant peerage on such pretences as those on which the Anglican clergy claim spiritual descent from the apostles?' † If such a succession has not been promised, and if it do not admit of actual proof, are we to base the validity of the ministry and of all christian ordinances on a mere peradventure? A bold assertion is it, that if a single link in the succession be wanting or amiss, then the institution of the pastorate, with all its attendant privileges, has ceased, so that we have not, and cannot again have, any christian ministry whatever! ‡

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 49. London. 1840.

† Quoted by Douglas of Cavers in his Popery and Infidelity, p. 12.

‡ Dr Brown of Langton adduces and substantiates numerous examples of 'succession destroyed' in his work on the Exclusive Claims of Puseyite Episcopalians, Letter xv. etc.

Regarding the abettors of this doctrine, Archbishop Whately, in his work on the Kingdom of Christ, says, 'They make our membership of the church of Christ, and our hopes of the gospel salvation, depend on an exact adherence to everything that is proved, or believed, or even suspected, to be an apostolical usage; and on our possessing what they call apostolical succession; that is, on our having a ministry whose descent can be traced up, in an unbroken and undoubted chain, to the apostles themselves, through men regularly ordained by them or their successors, according to the exact forms originally appointed. And all christians (so called) who do not come under this description, are to be regarded either as outcasts from "the household of faith," or at best as in a condition "analogous to that of the Samaritans of old" who worshipped on Mount Gerizim (John iv.,) or as in "an intermediate state between christianity and heathenism," and as "left to the uncovenanted mercies of God." Those who on such grounds defend the institutions and ordinances, and vindicate the apostolical character, of our own (or indeed of any) church,—whether on their own sincere conviction, or as believing that such arguments are the best calculated to inspire the mass of mankind with becoming reverence, and to repress the evil of schism,—do seem to me, in proportion as they proceed on those principles, to be, in the same degree, removing our institutions from a foundation on a rock, to place them on sand. Instead of a clearly-intelligible, well-established, and *accessible* proof of divine sanction for

the claims of our church, they would substitute one that is not only obscure, disputable, and out of the reach of the mass of mankind, but even self-contradictory, subversive of our own and every church's claims, and leading to the very evils of doubt, and schismatical division, which it is desired to guard against.' *

And in what a position does this theory of succession place Luther? He should, it seems, have gone the round of the multitude of papal bishops to find three, elevated or obscure, willing to ordain him, or to go along with him and make amends for his incapacity, by doing episcopal work for him. In the act of protesting against Rome, Luther should have enacted the suppliant to its bishops, beseeching them to make him a bishop, and confessing his dependence on Rome for those same functions with which he should attack its antichristian domination!

Bishop Onderdonk thinks, however, that apostolic succession is, in our days at least, of easy attainment. 'Allowing for former periods,' he says, 'all that is ever claimed on that score (of impossibility), there has been no difficulty at all in procuring a protestant episcopate, or else in finding one to conform to, and unite with, since the Scotch bishops consecrated Bishop Seeburg, the first on our American list.' †

There may have been no difficulty felt, and yet the absence of felt difficulty is no demonstration of being

* Essay II., § 17, 18.

† Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 51.

in the right. Dr Campbell, and other learned men, have maintained that the ordination of our present Scotch Episcopal clergy is solely from presbyters.* If it be doubtful whether our Scotch bishops have, it must be equally doubtful whether they can give, apostolical succession. Irrespectively of this question, the Scotch Episcopal Church rebukes the pretensions with which its name is here identified. As a church established by law, it owned the Confession of Faith, which was drawn up in 1560, and legally ratified in 1567; and which, though replaced for a time by the Westminster Confession, came again into force after the Restoration, and was the authoritative standard of doctrine till prelacy was abolished at the Revolution.† I perceive that Mr J. P. Lawson, in his History of the Scottish Episcopal Church, while he speaks disparagingly of the Westminster Confession, which he calls 'a lengthy compilation,' explicitly acknowledges that 'the old Confession, drawn up by

* On Eccles. His., vol. i., p. 355.

† I am aware that some of our Scotch Episcopalians do not like to be charged with the Confession of 1560, drawn up in four days by John Knox, John Row, John Winram, John Douglas, and John Spottiswood; and that Bishop Skinner, in his 'Primitive Faith and Order,' has endeavoured to parry this blow. Dr Campbell expresses himself somewhat strongly, when he characterises that Confession as containing 'the Doctrine of the Episcopal Reformed Church of Scotland' (On Eccles. Hist., Lect. iv.); and Dr Brown of Langton, when he calls it 'Their Confession' (On Puseyite Episcopacy, Letter xiv.) But the argument, to the extent of Mr Lawson's admission, quoted above, is, I think, legitimate and incontrovertible.

the early Scottish reformers, and ratified in 1567, had been all along the received and common standard of both parties,' episcopal and presbyterian.* And what is the doctrine of this Confession as to successional virtue? Its eighteenth article treats 'of the Notes by which the True Kirk is discerned from the False.' It there says, 'Becaus that Satan from the beginning hath laboured to decke his pestilent synagogue with the title of the Kirk of God, and hath inflammed the hearts of cruell murtherers to persecute, trouble, and molest the true Kirk and members thereof; as Cain did Abel, Ismael Isaack, Esau Jacob, and the whole priesthood of the Jewes Christ Jesus himself, and his apostles after him, it is a thing most requisite, that the true Kirk be discerned frome the filthie synagogues, by cleere and perfyt notes, least we, being deceaved, receave and embrace, to our owne condemnatioun, the one for the other. The notes, signes, and sure tokens whereby the immaculat spous of Christ Jesus is knowne frome the horrible harlot, the kirk malignant, we affirme, are neither antiquitie, title usurped, *lineall descent*, place appointed, nor multitude of men approving an errour.' † Here lineal descent is expressly disclaimed as a note of the true kirk. This Confession also maintains, article 22, concerning the papistical kirk, that 'their ministers are no ministers of Jesus Christ.' ‡ Here the doctrine of lineal descent is again discarded, and

* Chap iii. p. 52.

† See Calderwood's Hist., vol. ii. p. 28. Edinburgh. 1843.

‡ Ibid, p. 33.

papal ministers are declared not to be christian ministers—so that were succession ever so necessary, it would have in them no medium of transmission.

Yet succession is the one thing needful to ecclesiastical order, and even to acceptance with God and admission to glory, in the estimation of numbers who are confident of possessing the treasure themselves, and who ally the want of it in others with helpless, hopeless destitution.

These notions are regarded by most protestants as very arrogant in their own nature, and at the same time as most injurious to other religious denominations, in unchurching many of the holiest christian societies, and denying the ministerial character—nay, the christian character—to a large proportion of the most eminent reformers, ministers, and missionaries. The footing on which men are to be saved is often and clearly presented in scripture: 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.'* 'These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.'† 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'‡ No mention is made in such passages of any sacramental virtue depending for its efficacy on a transmission without breach by prelatic hands, from apostolic times. Salvation by the faith of Christ was the

* John iii. 36.. † John xx. 31. ‡ Acts xvi. 31.

apostolic doctrine. Is there no audacity and no danger in shifting the ground of the sinner's hope? Do they who so freely denounce all who are not of their sect, and who have not subscribed to their unrevealed and unattested Shibboleth, not fear the denunciation: 'I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.'*

We must not, however, confound all Episcopacy with the exclusive pretensions of a class of Episcopalians, however numerous and influential that class may be. The doctrine of succession might be exploded and abandoned, and yet the Episcopal model of church government might be the most scriptural and expedient.

Presbyterians and Independents sometimes evince a disposition to make short work with Episcopacy; and there is, I allow, a certain advantage in limiting attention to the more determining points of a controversy. But when we look at the power of the Anglican Church, and the vast influence for good or evil it is likely to exert on the spiritual condition of the

* Gal. i. 6–9.

world, surely we do well to scrutinise carefully and deliberately all its credentials. I propose to discuss the Episcopal argument as fully as the proportions of a compendious general treatise will allow, leaving to the reader the alternative, should he find the disquisition tiresome, of passing to the next Part. Looking away from abuses, even though they should be indigenous to the soil, I will examine the simplest principles of Episcopacy; and all I ask of brethren in the English Church, is to bear with a tone of decision in the following pages, exempt, I trust, from dogmatism and uncharitableness.

To give more concentration to the argument, I will direct my reply principally to Bishop Onderdonk's 'Episcopacy Tested by Scripture.' That production is able and temperate. It has excited much interest in America, and has elicited various replies. In this country it has been republished with much additional matter, taken from the author's answers to his opponents. The Rev. Albert Barnes, so favourably known among us as a commentator, says of it—'It is the best written, the most manly, elaborate, judicious, and candid discussion, in the form of a tract, which we have seen on this subject.' I have not met with Mr Barnes' contributions to this controversy; and all I know of any of the rejoinders to the bishop is derived from his own treatise, with the appended notes and essays, as published in London, 1840. These explanations I make, lest I should seem to do injustice to able allies. Their treatment of the subject would likely have supplied me with all that needed to be said or

that can be urged with propriety; but their articles and pamphlets were not at hand; and though it should be with inferior success, I was willing to give the most esteemed production of our day on the side of Episcopacy, a personal and independent examination.

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## CHAPTER II.

*The leading constituents of the Prelatical system—It finds a semblance of support in the language of the New Testament, which makes mention of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons—But the Bishops and Presbyters of Scripture are the same class of functionaries under different designations, and are not two orders—Many Episcopalians, perceiving and acknowledging the identity of scriptural Bishops and Presbyters, have relinquished all defence of the divine right of Episcopacy.*

It is the doctrine of Episcopacy that there are three orders in the christian ministry. The lowest order is that of Deacons, whose functions have been already discussed in the earlier portion of this treatise. In episcopal churches they preach and baptise, but are no longer almoners. The middle grade is that of Presbyters or Elders, the nature of whose office I have been latterly considering. The episcopal presbyters, besides preaching, administer both sacraments. The highest order consists of Bishops. The peculiar duties of the bishop are government or discipline, ordination and confirmation. The rite of confirmation does not bulk largely in controversy. Hooker says, in his Eccles. Polity (B. vii.,) 'I

make not confirmation any part of that power which hath always belonged only to bishops, because in some places the custom was that presbyters might also confirm in the absence of a bishop.' Yet, in practice, this right is sufficiently conspicuous, and greatly contributes to the special consequence of the bishop. It is admitted that presbyters have some charge of discipline, but to a limited extent, and only under the bishop's superintendence. As regards ordination, it is denied that presbyters can ordain even a presbyter, though by the imposition of their hands they may indicate concurrence in ordination by the bishop. 'Episcopacy,' says Bishop Onderdonk, 'declares that the christian ministry was established in *three orders*, called, ever since the apostolic age, bishops, presbyters or elders, and deacons, of which the highest only has the right to ordain and confirm, that of general supervision in a diocese, and that of the chief administration of spiritual discipline, besides enjoying all the powers of the other grades.'*

This scheme derives at first sight a semblance of support from the titles of office found in the New Testament. We there read of bishops, presbyters, deacons. These are the *three names;* have we not, then, the *three orders?* A very slight examination shows that two of the names belong to one order, and that bishop and presbyter are titles used interchangeably in the New Testament.

Paul, in journeying to Jerusalem, sent for the

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 12.

'*elders*' of Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, and he exhorted these *elders* to feed the church of God, over which the Holy Ghost had made them '*bishops*,'—rendered in our version overseers. The same individuals designated elders in the 17th verse of Acts xx., are designated bishops in the 28th verse; and how could it be made more manifest that the two designations respected one class of office-bearers? We find Paul saying to Titus, 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain *elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a *bishop* must be blameless, as the steward of God.'* Here we have in one verse a requirement to ordain *elders;* in the next verse their requisite qualifications; and in the verse succeeding, a reason why such qualifications were to be demanded of them: 'For a *bishop* must be blameless.' It will be observed that the term *elder*, used at the commencement, is exchanged for the term *bishop* in the conclusion, while the same office-bearer is spoken of. An *elder* must have such and such qualifications. Why? Because a *bishop* must be blameless, as the steward of God. Does not this identify the elder and the bishop? If not, identification is impossible. Were it said, the Lord Mayor of London must devote himself to his duties, for the chief magistrate of such a city has great responsi-

* Titus i. 5–7.

bilities,—would not the language bear, that the Lord Mayor and the chief magistrate were the same office-bearer? Otherwise, the representation would be absurd; for why should the mayor devote himself to his duties because some other person had great responsibilities? Yet the mayor and the chief magistrate are not more identified in this comparison, than are the elder and the bishop in Paul's instructions to Titus. We never find bishop and presbyter discriminated in the scriptures. Mention is made of apostles *and* elders, of bishops *and* deacons—never of bishops *and* elders. These considerations, as Bishop Burnet observes, were urged in the fourth century by Jerome, who, 'in his epistle to Evagrius, and on the epistle to Titus, maintains that all things were at first governed in the church by the common advice of presbyters, and that bishops were above presbyters, not by divine appointment, but by ecclesiastical usage;' and who quotes the very passages already cited, to show that 'bishop and presbyter were one and the same.'* On such grounds, Episcopalians are constrained to acknowledge that the bishops and elders of the New Testament were the same order. Much is said about the ambiguity of terms, and the sophistry of words; but there is no eventual escape from the admission that, in the apostolic age, elders were bishops and bishops were elders. We have the acknowledgment, in Bishop Hobart's 'Collection,' that the same class of func-

* See Bishop Burnet's Observations on the First and Second of the Canons, commonly ascribed to the holy Apostles, p. 7.—Glasgow, 1673.

tionaries were 'promiscuously called bishops, presbyters, elders, in the New Testament.'* 'It is proper,' says Bishop Onderdonk, 'to advert to the fact that the *name* "bishop," which now designates the highest grade of the ministry, is not appropriated to that office in scripture. That name is there given to the middle order, or presbyters, and all that we read in the New Testament concerning bishops, including, of course, the words overseers and oversight, which have the same derivation, is to be regarded as pertaining to that middle grade.'†

The scriptural identity of bishops and presbyters, thus unequivocally acknowledged, has been regarded by many Episcopalians as fatal to the divine right of Episcopacy, and as requiring them to base the defence of their system on the power of the state or the church, and the principles of expediency. They contend that the scriptures guide us in regard to doctrine and morality, but not in regard to government; that though the apostles organised the church on a plan suitable to their own era, they have not told us how much of their arrangements we are to adopt, or, with any distinctness, even what their arrangements were; just because they would not abridge our christian liberty, or deter us, if we keep the faith, from fashioning its ecclesiastical framework in accommodation to circumstances. Thus Dr Whitgift, then Master of Trinity College, and latterly Archbishop of Canterbury, in his 'Vindication of the Hierarchy,'

* See Mason on Epis., chap ii. p. 38.

† Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 12.

which was revised by Archbishop Parker, and the Bishops of London and Ely, and dedicated to the Church of England, denies that the scriptures, though a perfect rule of faith, were designed to be a hand-maid of discipline or government. Hooker, in his Ecclesiastical Polity, maintains 'that matters of faith are of a different nature from the kind of church government: that the one is necessary to be expressly contained in the word of God, or else manifestly collected out of the same; the other not so: that it is necessary not to receive the one unless there be something in scripture for them; the other free, if nothing against them may thence be alleged.' He sees 'no just or reasonable cause to reject or dislike of this.'*

On the question 'whether the apostles themselves left bishops invested with power above other pastors, or, 'whether, after the apostles were deceased, churches did agree among themselves, for preservation of peace and order, to make one presbyter in each city chief over the rest,' he speaks undecidedly. But he argues that God appoints what reason sanctions, and that though the superiority of bishops should be accounted a thing which 'the brain of man hath devised,' yet 'the ordination of officers, and the very institution of their offices, may be truly derived from God, and approved of him, although they be not always of him in such sort as those things are which are in scripture.'† The English Houses of Parliament, for a long period

* Book iii., sect. 2, p. 131. Works. London, 1676.
† Ecclesiastical Polity, book vii. sect. xi. (6) pp. 395, 6. Lon. 1676.

after the Reformation, 'were almost, to a man,' says Neal, 'of the principle of Erastus, who maintained that Christ and his apostles had prescribed no particular form of discipline for his church in after ages, but had left the keys in the hands of the civil magistrate, who had the sole power of punishing transgressors, and of appointing such particular forms of church government, from time to time, as were most subservient to the peace and welfare of the commonwealth. Indeed, these were the principles of our church reformers, from Archbishop Cranmer down to Bancroft.'* 'At the era of the Reformation,' says Dr Thomas M'Crie, 'Episcopacy was not considered by any of the reformers as a part of divine institution, but as a mere human appendage.' †

It is reasonable to doubt whether a valid scriptural argument for prelacy, if it had existed, would have been missed so generally, and in times of earnest inquiry, by the episcopal world. Not a few Episcopalians in our own day occupy substantially the same ground. Archbishop Whately holds that 'the writers of the New Testament do not record the number of distinct orders of ministers, or the functions appropriated to each, or the degree, and kind, and mode of control exercised in the churches.' He argues that 'the institutions of the English Church, though not at variance with any apostolic injunctions, or with any gospel principle, are in several points not precisely coincident with those of the earliest churches.' One of

* History of the Puritans, by Daniel Neal, vol. i. pref. p. xix.
† Miscellaneous Writings, pp. 174, 5.

the 'points' which he specifies as discriminating the actual from the ancient church, is the modern bishop ruling more than one society. 'A church and a diocese,' he says, 'seem to have been for a considerable time *co-extensive* and *identical*.' Yet he does not condemn the institutions of Prelates and Sees. He thinks they have been introduced by the church in the allowable or commendable exercise of discretionary power.

In relation to such views, Bungener says, 'It is a point which we can concede (to the Romanists) that the sacerdotal hierarchy, like the succession of orders, is not in itself a bad thing, and to be condemned.' But 'however ancient may be the tradition in virtue of which bishops are chiefs of the church, whatever reasons of discipline, unity, and order may be urged in its favour, it remains evident that the superiority of the bishops over the presbyters or priests, is a matter of ecclesiastical arrangement, and is human and mutable.'* On grounds already stated (Part I.) I am not careful to discuss those 'reasons of discipline, purity, and order,' for the appointment of prelates, to which Bungener here alludes. One circumstance is important to be remarked, that, *by universal admission*, the New Testament *is clear and explicit about the order of presbyter bishops*. Nobody doubts that they were a stated class of functionaries in the primitive churches. It is only the diocesan bishop whose case is in question. He only, as the matter is stated by

* Hist. of the Council of Trent, from French of L. F. Bungener, pp. 377–379. Edinburgh, J. Constable & Co., 1852.

countless Episcopalian authorities themselves, is missing in evangelical narrative and nomenclature; and when he is sought for in the New Testament, is found—*nowhere*. But if presbyters, about whose scriptural status there is no obscurity or doubt, can adequately superintend the church, why introduce other superintendents of whom scripture says nothing? Above all, why subordinate the scriptural institution to the human and the conventional? We prefer to keep the ordinances as the apostles delivered them unto us.

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## CHAPTER III.

*Some Episcopalians hold that their system is sanctioned by scripture, and maintain that the apostles filled the same office as modern Prelates, and constituted the highest of three grades of clergy.*

We have seen that many who approve of Episcopacy do not claim for it express scriptural precept or pattern. They think that Jesus instituted a church, and endowed it with certain rights and privileges essential to its well-being, in virtue of which it may legitimately modify ecclesiastical orders, and bring them into accordance with times and seasons. Or if the church would be convulsed by adventuring on such changes, its ally, the state, may undertake for it the critical task, and secure unanimity and submission by the formidable argument of penal sanctions. But others take a different view of the subject. They claim scriptural warrant for their polity,

and maintain that bishops are found in the New Testament, though under a different name. There we meet with them, say they, under the title of apostles. 'The highest grade,' observes Bishop Onderdonk, 'is there found in those called apostles.' * This grade included not only 'the twelve,' but such functionaries as Timothy and Titus, and the seven angels of the Asiatic churches. All these teachers, we are assured, were of the same order; they were all apostles, or, as we should say in these days, bishops; and they held the same office as our modern diocesans. This is the ground taken by Episcopalians who plead scripture for their hierarchy; and according as it proves stable or unstable, the divine warrant for a ministry in three orders stands or falls. I will endeavour to show that the scriptural argument for Episcopacy, so presented, wars with the diction of scripture, confounds orders which scripture distinguishes, and invalidates that authority of presbyters which scripture is careful to establish. If any one of these positions be made good, the episcopal plea will be confuted; if they all be made good, the confutation will be more complete and convincing.

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 12.

## CHAPTER IV.

*The scriptural argument for Episcopacy wars with scriptural diction —The examples brought to countenance such changes as it supposes in the meaning of terms are not in point—History appealed to without success—The writings of John do not show that language was then in a transition state, and verging towards Episcopal terminology.*

THE first difficulty which meets us in contemplating this theory, is the freedom which it uses with language. Names are representative of things, and any exposition of scripture which makes havoc of its nomenclature, may be reasonably suspected of doing violence to facts. No doubt words, in the course of time, modify their meaning; but we can in general discern the cause, and mark the extent, and trace the progress of the modification: so that words still prove safe guides in exploring the realms of antiquity. If supposed changes in diction are many and great—here varying and there reversing its sense—we have reason to pause and doubt before yielding to them our assent. Should it be alleged that bishops gradually extended their range of influence, and as ages rolled on, still added to the capaciousness and imperativeness of their sway, till the name bishop came to include a varied power beyond what it originally expressed, there is here a modification of language, accounted for by a not unnatural alteration of circumstances. But when we are told that the *title* apostle was dropped though the *office* was upheld—that bishops also surrendered the name of bishops, and

thereafter passed it over to apostles, no longer so called, and now in want of a distinguishing appellation, there appears in all this a complication of revolutions in language resembling, if not out-rivalling, the contortions and inversions of strata discovered by geologists in the crust of the earth, for which cycles of ages are deemed necessary to account. Bishop Onderdonk is entitled to support his position by examples of terms altering their signification; and if they are in point, we are bound to receive them as proof of such changes as he contends for being possible. 'One irregularity in regard to the application of names,' he says, 'is particularly worthy of notice. The word Sabbath is applied in scripture to only the Jewish day of rest; by very common use, however, it means the Lord's-day. Now, the Sabbath is abolished by christianity, and the observance of it discountenanced; yet ministers of christian denominations are constantly urging their christian flocks to keep the Sabbath.'* We were told that the apostolic office is continued while the name is dropped. Is the Sabbath then continued? Bishop Onderdonk assures us that it is abolished: so far the parallelism fails. Apostles, we are informed, lost the name apostles, and bishops lost the name bishops: has the first day of the week lost its appellation? No, it is still called the first day of the week, and the Lord's-day; and so there is no example here of a title passing into desuetude. This is another defect

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 17.

in the comparison. All that can be alleged is that when the day of Christ's resurrection is called the Sabbath, a new institution gets an old name. But a large proportion of christians do not regard the institution as essentially new. They believe that the Lord's-day replaces the Sabbath, and perpetuates the principle of devoting one day out of seven expressly to God's worship, and fulfils the same ends of humanity and devotion. If the institutions are believed to have so much in common, or rather to be in substance identical, can we wonder that they should receive occasionally the same designation? Surely a change in language thus *simple*, and *single*, and *easily accounted for*, appears very diminutive beside the metamorphoses of signification which it is adduced to countenance. Bishop Onderdonk is not more happy in another example, when he tells us that 'the original meaning of emperor *(imperator)* was only a general, but it was afterwards appropriated to the monarch: and the original meaning of bishop was only a presbyter, but the name passed from that middle grade to the highest.'* We can easily enough understand how presbyter-bishops should gradually slide into prelatical bishops—the men rising in their pretensions, and upbearing their titles with them. What we find most startling and most unusual is the alleged *abandonment of dignity*. When the tide of aggrandisement had set in, and was already flowing with no feeble current towards its consummation in

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 15.

popery, that a whole order of men, who were truly and rightfully apostles, should spontaneously lay down the most honoured of appellations and adopt another in its stead, hitherto the characteristic of inferiors, appears a miracle of voluntary humiliation; and after all the illustrations which Bishop Onderdonk has supplied, I must pronounce it alike unexplained and unexampled.

But the alleged transposition of titles is proved, we are told, from history. 'It was after the apostolic age,' says Bishop Onderdonk, 'that the name bishop was taken from the second order and applied to the first, as we learn from Theodoret, one of the Fathers.'* Nothing is said here about the disappearance of the title apostle. We are not so much as told whether it was 'taken from' its owners or thrown aside by their own act. But suppose that the statement of Theodoret comprised the whole case, what is his testimony worth? Eusebius, who flourished in the third and fourth centuries, having written a passage which seemed very unequivocally to countenance ordination by presbyters, and this passage having been quoted by Presbyterians, Bishop Onderdonk replies—'Eusebius here describes what took place long before his own time, and what therefore he knew but imperfectly.'† But Theodoret wrote fully a century later, and he refers to an epoch still earlier, and must he not then give his testimony under all the disadvantages of imperfect knowledge? Bunsen says,

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 15. † Ibid, p. 41.

regarding writers of the fourth century, that they were only critics, and most of them very indifferent and biassed ones.* For a writer of the fifth century to tell us what magical vicissitudes befel names in the age just following the apostolic, is to come late indeed to the help of the hierarchy. But is there no earlier witness? none, or he would have been called. Surely some of the apostles would object to lay down their honoured title, and accept another less honourable. Right good reasons could they have urged for their reluctance. 'If we surrender the name of apostles,' they might have said, 'it will be naturally inferred that we have disclaimed the office. If we take the title of bishops, it will of course be understood that we laid claim to no higher grade; and thus future ages will be snared by our versatility into misapprehension and strife. And why should we part with a name which the mouth of the Lord has named for us, or rob inferiors of their appropriate designation to clothe ourselves with the spoil?' But there is no record, no vestige of any such controversy. All the parties interested in retaining the title apostles, or the title bishops, surrendered to some unimaginable necessity without a struggle, so indifferent to the fact as to say nothing about it; and in evidence that such a fact ever happened, we must take the word of Theodoret. What he may say on such a subject is of little moment. But the circumstance that none testified before him to the transference of titles, upwards and downwards from

* Hippolytus and his Age, vol. i., let. v., p. 321.

grade to grade, is of mighty significance, and stamps on the whole theory the palpable impress of a modern imagination.

But Bishop Onderdonk has some scripture for this article of belief. 'It is perhaps worthy of remark,' he says, 'that the word "apostle" occurs nowhere in the gospel of St John; [xiii. 16 forms no exception; compare Matt. x. 24; Luke vi. 40. Besides, c. xv. 20 shows that the latter clause of c. xiii. 16, is merely expletive of the preceding clause; and therefore ἀποστολος is not used in its *proper* sense. Ed.] "disciple" being generally substituted for it. Neither does it occur in his epistles: nor in the Revelation; except in ii. 2, where it is applied to the impostors, and in c. xviii. 20, where, engrafted into an exaltation of the latter days, it refers (as in xxi. 14) to the inspired founders of christianity. All these writings belong to the close of the first century. By not calling the "angels" either apostles or bishops, St John conformed to the then unsettled use of those words. And by calling the twelve "disciples" only, instead of apostles, he avoided giving them a title which he withheld from their official compeers, the "angels." We build nothing on these facts and explanations, but they certainly harmonise well with the historical declaration, that ministers of the Episcopal grade were originally called apostles; but, as the first century was passing into the second, that name was relinquished, and that of bishops assumed.'* Without discussing in

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture. Appen. p. 12.

what sense John used the term apostles on other occasions, I only ask how the writer expects to evade the force of Rev. xviii. 20, and Rev. xxi. 14, by saying that these passages refer to the inspired founders of christianity? 'Rejoice over her, ye holy apostles and prophets.' 'And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.' These latter words not only make mention of the apostles under their appropriate title, but assign to them a distinctive number, a distinctive position, a distinctive influence, and in every way mark them off from that throng of functionaries with whom Bishop Onderdonk confounds them. 'The constant and undeniable parallel,' says Lightfoot, 'which is made betwixt *the twelve patriarchs* and *the twelve apostles* by the New Testament in the four and twenty elders (Rev. iv. 4), and in the gates and foundations of the new Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 12–14), doth argue and prove the latter order as unimitable as the first.'*

There is another element which must be taken into account. It was to the writer's purpose to show not simply that in the close of John's life the *title of apostle was going out*, but also that *the title of bishop in lieu of apostle was coming in.* But John never calls an apostle a bishop; and what is yet more remarkable, he never uses the word bishop nor any of its cognate terms at all. Such being the case, the keenest friends of Episcopacy will hold Bishop Onderdonk justified in 'building nothing on these facts and explanations.'

* On the Acts, ch. viii. v. 17.

## CHAPTER V.

SECT. I.—*Episcopacy, in its scriptural argument, confounds orders widely separated in the New Testament, classing under one grade the twelve, Timothy and Titus, and the angels of the churches of Asia—The title Apostle sometimes used generally in the sense of messenger—examples—Apostles, in the official sense of the term, were made cognisant of the whole counsel of God in the gospel by immediate inspiration—They required to have seen the risen Saviour, that they might be witnesses of his resurrection—Examination of the objection, that Timothy and others, without this qualification, were called apostles—The apostles, besides working miracles, were empowered to confer miraculous gifts on others—From such considerations, it appears that the apostolic office was extraordinary and temporary, and that the apostles have no successors.*

THE second difficulty which presents itself in a ministry of three orders, is the identification it makes among office-bearers who in scripture are distinguished, and even widely dissociated. Bishop Onderdonk speaks (page 40) of 'THE OFFICE of the apostles, and of Timothy and Titus, and the seven angels.' Would any simple reader of the New Testament, who had no theory to prove and no purpose to serve, find or imagine that Paul and Timothy had the same official standing? And if this equalisation were effected, would it prepare him to include in the same list the Asiatic angels? The apostleship, by this theory, gains little in its progress—rather it becomes small by degrees, and beautifully less. Timothy appears very secondary beside Paul; and the angels are but local men, with circumscribed influence, beside Timothy. And yet Bishop Onderdonk assures

us—and the episcopal hypothesis requires us to believe—that the twelve apostles and the seven angels were 'official compeers.' Let us see how this official sameness manifests itself in the New Testament. Bishop Onderdonk is at much pains to prove what nobody disputes, that Timothy had a higher office than elders, the stated office-bearers of the church. In demonstrating this undisputed point, the Bishop says, 'Let any one read Acts xx. 28–35, and consider well what St Paul there gives as a charge to the elders (presbyters or presbyter-bishops) of Ephesus. Then let him read the two epistles to Timothy, and reflect candidly on the charge which the same apostle gives to him personally, Timothy at Ephesus. And after this comparison of the charges, let him decide whether scripture does not set that one individual above those elders in ecclesiastical rights,' etc.* We admit the interval between Timothy and the elders, but we think that the apostle, in establishing it, exhibits a not less considerable chasm between Timothy and himself. Very noticeable is the demarcation here presented between the party charging and the party charged: 'This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy.'† 'These things I write unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God,' etc.‡ 'I give thee charge in the sight of God, . . . . that thou keep this commandment,' etc.§ 'Hold fast the form of sound

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 31.
† 1 Tim. i. 18. ‡ Ib. iii. 14, 15. § Ib. vi. 13, 14.

words which thou hast heard of me.'* 'Consider what I say.'† 'Study to show thyself approved unto God.'‡ 'Flee also youthful lusts.'§ 'I charge thee before God, . . . preach the word.'‖ 'Watch thou in all things.'¶ 'Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.'** 'Do thy diligence to come before winter.'†† The same apostle speaks in like terms to Titus, another of his alleged official compeers: 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.'‡‡ 'Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine; these things speak and exhort,' etc.§§ Is this the style of address from one apostle to another? or is not all probability outraged by the allegation, that we have here the language of equal to equal, and both of them diocesans? If by such phraseology official equality is proved, we beg at least to know by what selection or combination of terms the supposition of it could be confuted.

Let us look a little more particularly at the scriptural characters grouped together by Episcopalians in their highest order. We have here THE APOSTLES. The title signifies, derivatively, one sent forth, or a messenger, and sometimes it is used in this primary and unofficial sense. Many other terms have, in like manner, a general and an appropriated signification.

* 2 Tim. i. 13. † Ib. ii. 7.
‡ 2 Tim. ii. 15. § Ib. ii. 22. ‖ Ib. iv. 1, 2.
¶ 2 Tim. iv. 5. ** Ib. iv. 9. †† Ib. iv. 21.
‡‡ Tit. i. 5. §§ Ib. ii. 1, 15.

Of course, the question arises, wherever these terms occur, whether they are used in the one way or the other; and there is occasional difficulty in deciding the point. If it were said that certain men had a difference, and that a certain other man judged between them, we might be at a loss whether this mediating party was really a judge, or whether he merely gave the disputants the benefit of his judgment. In one or two instances, there is a little obscurity of this nature hanging over the use of the term Apostle. But the obscuration is rare and faint indeed. 'The name of "apostles,"' says Lightfoot, 'keepeth itself unmixed or confounded with any other order. It is true indeed that the significancy of the word would agree to other ministers that are to preach; but there is a peculiar propriety in the sense that hath confined the title to the twelve and Paul, as any indifferent eye will judge and censure, upon the weighing of it in the New Testament.'* It is universally admitted, that the word apostle had an official sense; and the 'marks of an apostle' are more definite and more readily recognised than those perhaps of any other functionary.

That apostles must have been numerous, Dr Onderdonk argues from the mention occasionally made of false apostles. He reminds us of the commendation bestowed on the angel of Ephesus: 'Thou hast tried them who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.'† And who were

* On the Acts, chap. viii. 17.

† Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 36.

these pretence apostles? 'Their assuming the title of apostles,' says Dr Onderdonk, 'shows that there were enough of others (besides those usually so called) who had this title to make their pretended claim to it plausible.'* But if these false teachers are not called apostles merely to show their arrogance, and as we speak of 'an apostle of mischief;' if they in good earnest laid claim to the apostleship, and supported their claim by 'plausible' arguments, then what do we make of several seeming apostles in single churches, where Episcopacy can afford only one bishop to a whole diocese? And in what capacity did the angel try a number of apostolic claimants? We have no modern dignitary competent for that task. I suspect that spurious apostles are not likely to be more serviceable to Dr Onderdonk's cause than they proved to the christian church. This example can establish nothing decisively, since false apostles were confessedly *no apostles at all.*

'I supposed it necessary,' says Paul, 'to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, (literally apostle,) and he that ministered to my wants.'† Some, in their eagerness to multiply apostles, place this Epaphroditus among the number. But he is not called *an* apostle; he is called *your* apostle. The name befitted Epaphroditus *only in relation to those addressed;* and where do we ever find the apostleship of one of the twelve so restricted? Farther, the

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 20. † Phil. ii. 25.

context shows that Epaphroditus had a *message* or commission from the Philippians, and consequently was *their messenger*, though they could not have monopolised *an apostle*. 'I have all, and abound,' says Paul: 'I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you.'* The christians at Philippi sent things to Paul by Epaphroditus—was not Epaphroditus their messenger? The disputed passage itself has evident reference to this appointment: 'Your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.' How did Epaphroditus minister to Paul's wants?—by conveying to him things needful from the Philippians. It was kind in the christians at Philippi to furnish these supplies—it was kind in Epaphroditus to be the personal bearer of them; and is not the twofold kindness delicately but unequivocally owned in the words, 'Your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants?'—your messenger, in getting a charge from you for me; and he that ministered to my wants, as he faithfully executed his labour of love in my behalf. The messenger, as distinguishable from the apostle, officially so called, is clearly exhibited in such language.

But how shall apostles, in the appropriated sense of the term, be discriminated from other functionaries? We have found Paul saying to Timothy, 'Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me.'† This verse, and others similar, present Paul as having indoctrinated Timothy in the embassage he

* Phil. iv. 18. † 2 Tim. i. 13.

was to deliver; and Bishop Onderdonk admits (Note I., p. 51) that Timothy was not inspired. How does Paul speak of his own initiation in the knowledge of the gospel? 'I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.'* The apostle expresses himself to the same effect on various occasions; and the two classes of passages brought together evolve this difference between Timothy and Paul—that Timothy had his instructions instrumentally from Paul, while Paul had his instructions directly from Heaven. In other words, THE APOSTLES WERE AT ONCE MADE COGNISANT BY INSPIRATION OF THAT WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD WHICH THEY SHUNNED NOT TO DECLARE. We learn from the opening verses of the Acts of the Apostles, that our Lord led them to expect this extraordinary illumination as one of their distinguishing privileges: 'He was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandment unto the apostles whom he had chosen. . . . And, being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.'†

Another qualification indispensable to an apostle was THE COMPETENCY OF TESTIFYING FROM PERSONAL OB-

* Gal. i. 11, 12. † Acts i. 2, 4, 5.

SERVATION TO THE FACT OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION. No one could be an apostle who had not seen Jesus alive after his decease. Of no avail is the reply of Bishop Onderdonk—'Nor were the apostles thus distinguished because they had seen our Lord after his resurrection; for five hundred brethren saw him,' etc.* It is not alleged that every one who saw the risen Saviour was thereby constituted an apostle; but it is alleged that such a sight of Christ was indispensable to the apostleship. Apart from the controversy between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, there are difficulties connected with the elevation of Matthias to the apostolic office, as it was proceeded in while the disciples were waiting for the promise of the Father, and were not yet baptised with the Holy Ghost for the official engagements of the evangelical dispensation. But if the appointment of Matthias be held to have been regular and valid, it will establish, as Lightfoot has shown, and not disprove, the extrarodinary and temporary character of the trust to which he was preferred. 'The apostles,' says that learned commentator, 'could not ordain an apostle by imposition of hands; but they are forced to use a divine lot, which was as the immediate hand of Christ imposed on him that was to be ordained: that opinion took little notice of this circumstance that hath placed bishops in the place of the apostles by a common and successive ordination.' † As regards the point under more immediate consideration, we find Peter most

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 20.

† On the Acts, ch. i. 21.

particularly declaring, that the choice must of necessity be among those who had beheld the risen Redeemer: 'Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.' * This condition of the apostleship is held forth most prominently throughout the New Testament: 'Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and ye are witnesses of these things.' † 'This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.' ‡ 'Whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.' § 'With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.' ‖ 'Peter and the other apostles said, The God of our fathers raised up Jesus. Him hath God exalted with his right hand. And we are his witnesses of these things.' ¶ In these passages, 'apostles' and witnesses to Christ's resurrection appear as allied, and almost convertible appellations. That Paul might join in the apostolic testimony, he was preternaturally favoured with a sight of the risen Saviour: 'Last of all HE WAS SEEN OF ME also, as of one born out of due time: FOR I AM THE LEAST OF THE APOSTLES.' ** The apostles, then, were witnesses to Christ's resurrection—such witness-bearing was essential to

* Acts i. 21, 22. † Luke xxiv. 46, 48.
‡ Acts ii. 32. § Acts iii. 15. ‖ Acts iv. 33.
¶ Acts v. 30–32. ** 1 Cor. xv. 8.

their apostleship—and it is remarkable that the title *witness*, assigned so frequently to them, is used of no others as office-bearers. So broad and clear is the induction by which we show that a personal testimony to Christ's rising was of the essence of the apostolic embassage. And when this position has been made good by such plentiful and unequivocal proof, we feel warranted in explaining by it a few phrases which, separately regarded, might have borne a different interpretation; and in saying, that if Timothy, Silvanus, Andronicus, Junia, etc., receive this appellation, they were such apostles as Epaphroditus was—messengers, but not 'called to be apostles' in the special and official sense of the expression. Bishop Onderdonk himself admits that 'the twelve apostles were selected as special witnesses of the resurrection.'* This is befitting language. It is not said twelve of the apostles, but *the* twelve apostles; and they are characterised not simply as *witnesses*, but as '*special witnesses* of the resurrection.' So difficult is it, with the New Testament in our hands, to deny to the apostles an appointment which belonged to them only, and which therefore ceased with themselves.

And where are Timothy and Silvanus called apostles? Nowhere directly. But Paul begins an epistle by saying, 'Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians;' and in the sixth verse of the second chapter of that epistle,† he says,

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 20. † 1 Thess. ii. 6.

'We [the parties named in the inscription, says Dr Onderdonk] might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.' So very much has been made of this circumstance, that I am obliged to give it a somewhat ample consideration. In reply, I remark—

(1.) That *the headings of Paul's epistles and their contents have no such punctilious coherence as this argument supposes.* They were still *his* epistles, though others concurred with him in sending them; and under the term '*we*' he sometimes includes only himself, and sometimes other parties than he had named in the salutation. In the second chapter and third verse of the epistle in question it is said, 'We sent Timotheus to establish you.' If the term 'we' must be understood strictly of the persons named in the inscription, we have here Timothy sending himself. In the commencement of the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul associates Sosthenes with himself. But there is in the epistle no other allusion to that 'brother.' Where 'we' afterwards occurs, as it does repeatedly, the context always shows that Sosthenes is not intended specially, if at all. In the inscription of the second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul associates with himself Timothy. But in some passages of that epistle he evidently means by *we* the inspired apostles. Thus it is said, 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'* This

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

language was applicable to those who had their knowledge of the gospel by immediate revelation, but did not apply to Timothy, who, as Bishop Onderdonk admits, was not inspired, and was instructed by Paul.

(2.) *To whomsoever the term* 'WE' *in* 1 Thess. ii. 6 *may pertain, it does not seem to relate to Timothy.* Mr Barnes justly calls attention to verse second of the same chapter, where Paul says, 'We had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi.' We read of Paul and Silas having suffered, and been shamefully entreated at Philippi;* but nothing of the kind is narrated of Timothy. To say that he may, notwithstanding, have been there, and may have suffered, and been evil entreated in some way not told, is rather to make a history than to receive one.

(3.) In 1 Thess. ii. 6—the passage in question—Paul probably uses the plural 'we' with a singular sense. He says in the same chapter, verse 18, 'We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.' Bishop Onderdonk replies, 'It is not unusual, indeed, for St Paul to use the plural number of himself only; but the words "apostles" and "our own souls" (verse 8), being inapplicable to the singular use of the plural number, shows that the three names at the head of this epistle are here spoken of jointly. And thus Silas and Timothy are, with Paul, recognised in this passage

* Acts xxvi.

of scripture as "apostles."'* Although it were shown that the term 'we' had in this passage a plural signification, additional proof would need to be adduced that Timothy is included. We have seen that there is no such connexion usually between the headings of Paul's epistles and their contents as to determine this point. By 'apostles,' Paul might mean *the apostles* emphatically so called; or he might use the word in its general acceptation of messengers, heralds of Christ. When it suits his purpose, Bishop Onderdonk contends (page 45) for the term apostle not being used in its proper sense. Why fix on it its proper sense in this connexion? Paul does not elsewhere say of apostles only that they might devolve on the churches the burden of their support. He lays down the general maxim, that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and why may he not be here also understood to say that *Christ's messengers* are entitled to support from his people? Although, then, the term 'we' were proved to have here a plural sense, it might not include Timothy; and although it were proved to include Timothy, he might be called an apostle only as being a minister of Christ. So far are the premises of Bishop Onderdonk from being commensurate with his conclusion. We do not admit, however, that the plural sense of the plural pronoun is established by him. Paul says 'apostles' and 'souls' in conjunction with 'we.' What of that? If, in speaking of himself, he used the plural at all,

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 55.

would he not naturally and fitly use the plural throughout, and maintain consistency in his language? He does so on other occasions. I shall notice only one example which Bishop Onderdonk has attempted to set aside, but in vain. Paul says, 'I have said before, that ye are in our HEARTS to die and live with you.'* The reference to what was 'said before,' carries us back to the 11th and 12th verses of the preceding chapter: 'O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, *our heart* is enlarged!' The plural *hearts* of the one passage is explained by the singular *heart* of the other, and both are expressive of Paul's affection. 'No,' replies Bishop Onderdonk, 'our heart is a general or collective phrase:' Paul thus speaks for himself and others collectively. Such an explanation is chill and constrained in the extreme. To make Paul speak at a peradventure for others, is here to extinguish the fire of his eloquence. The power and spirit of the phraseology depend entirely on its *certain and felt truth.* Who can rid himself of callous criticism, and candidly peruse these words, 'O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged,' and not read in them *a conscious enlargement of heart* —an irrepressible burst of *personal emotion?*

Such objections, therefore, do not shake the probability that Paul uses plural language with a singular sense in the 6th verse, as he does confessedly in the 18th verse of the second chapter of 1 Thess., and that

* 2 Cor. vii. 3.

he is speaking of himself when he says, 'We might have been burdensome to you as apostles of Christ.'

On various occasions he speaks in a way leading us clearly to infer that Timothy was not an apostle. The first epistle to the Corinthians thus commences, 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.' The mere circumstance of calling Timothy a brother, is not the main stumbling-block to Episcopacy exhibited in this inscription. The connexion in which it occurs constitutes the grand difficulty. Why did Paul here introduce his own apostleship with so much solemnity and amplitude of language? Was it not to get suitable respect for his official standing and duties? But if so, did not Timothy equally need all the homage due to his functions? Is there any likelihood that Paul would do so much justice to himself, and in the same sentence be so wanting to an official 'compeer?' He enjoined on Timothy a carefulness to let no man despise his youth. But if Timothy was an apostle, how could Paul more effectually have silenced the despisers of that fellow-labourer than by asserting, clearly and emphatically, his apostleship? He does this for himself *once* and *again* and *often;* but *never for Timothy.* Nay, in the act of avowing himself an apostle, he withholds the title from Timothy, whom he calls simply brother. Such a procedure on the part of the generous Paul, forces on us the conviction that the epithet 'brother' is here discriminative in its relation to the designation 'apostle,' and marks a wide interval in the positions respectively denoted by

them. So much is this the case, that Archbishop Potter supposes Timothy to have accompanied Paul in the capacity *of a deacon.* Bishop Onderdonk is very displeased with his Grace for holding such a notion: 'The cause of the mistake of this able defender of Episcopacy seems to have been twofold. He overlooked the passage referred to, which speaks of Timothy as an apostle; and he was misled by the word διακονουντων in Acts xix. 22, where it is said that Timothy and Erastus "ministered" unto Paul; which he supposes to mean "were Paul's deacons." This is but the old error, so often exposed, of arguing from names instead of facts.'* That Archbishop Potter overlooked 1 Thess. ii. 6, is by no means likely. He probably was of the same mind with ourselves, that it assigns no apostleship to Timothy. But in considering Timothy a deacon, he fell, it seems, into the old error of arguing from names. And what is Bishop Onderdonk here doing but arguing from names—from the name *apostle, supposed* to be given *once* by *implication* to Timothy? At best, this is a narrow and critical foundation on which to rear Timothy's apostleship; but it has no other. As for Titus, the title is wholly wanting for him, and cannot be made good to him even by inference or implication. On the whole, the attempt to establish exceptions to the apostolic qualification of having seen the risen Saviour, has no semblance of success in opposition to the clear, decisive, and accumulated evidence of the

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 58.

rule, that the apostles had a special commission to attest Christ's resurrection from the dead, and that persons incompetent to give this testimony were ineligible to the apostleship.

I only remark farther, in regard to the peculiar qualifications of the apostles, that THEY HAD NOT ONLY THE GIFT OF MIRACLES IN A NOTABLE AND UNUSUAL DEGREE, BUT THE SINGULAR POWER OF CONFERRING MIRACULOUS GIFTS ON OTHERS. 'When the covetous Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.'* Paul had this qualification; and having, in virtue of it, communicated preternatural gifts to the christians at Corinth, he could say to them, 'I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.' †

From all this it appears that the apostles had distinctive seals of office; and the possession of certain qualifications by all of them is the more remarkable, that one of their number did not obtain these in the same manner as the rest, and yet was provided with them in a way suitable to his circumstances. This conclusion is not held by Presbyterians alone: it is

* Acts viii. 18, 19. † 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12.

acquiesced in by able writers of all ages and parties. Augustine expressly maintained that the office of an apostle was above that of bishop.* So did Jerome, as we have found Bishop Burnet frankly acknowledging. Dr Barrow, an eminent Episcopal writer, shows, with many citations from the Fathers in support of the proposition, that 'the apostolical office, as such, was personal and temporary, and therefore, according to its nature and design, not successive nor communicable to others in perpetual descendence from them.' He concludes an ample array of proof by saying, 'Such an office, consisting of so many extraordinary privileges and miraculous powers which were requisite for the foundation of the church and the diffusion of christianity, against the manifold difficulties and disadvantages which it then must needs encounter, was not designed to continue by derivation; for it containeth in it divers things which apparently were not communicated, and which no man without gross imposture and hypocrisy could challenge to himself. Neither did the apostles pretend to communicate it; they did indeed appoint standing pastors and teachers in each church; they did assume fellow-labourers and assistants in the work of preaching and governance; but they did not constitute apostles equal to themselves in authority, privileges, or gifts. For who knoweth not (saith St Augustine) that principate of apostleship to be preferred before any Episcopacy? and the bishops (saith Bellarmine) have no part of the true

* De Bapt. C. Don. ii. 1.

apostolical authority.'* Lightfoot, in his commentary on the Acts, is cogent in behalf of the same conclusions. Living authors express like views; and Archbishop Whately merely gives utterance to the sentiments of moderate Episcopalians in general, when he says, 'Successors, in the apostolic office, the apostles have none. As *personal attendants* on the Lord Jesus, and *witnesses* of his *resurrection*—as *dispensers* of *miraculous* gifts—as inspired *oracles* of divine *revelation*—they have no successors. But as *members*, as *ministers*, as *governors*, of christian communities, their successors are the regularly-admitted members, the lawfully-ordained ministers, the regular and recognised governors, of a regularly-subsisting christian church.' † If the apostles were not diocesan bishops—as we trust it has appeared they were not—we are still left to ask, where were such bishops in the primitive age?

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## CHAPTER V.

SECT. II.—*The ministry of Timothy and Titus considered—They were invested with high powers, but these powers were held and exercised in subordination to apostles—Timothy was not Bishop of Ephesus, nor Titus of Crete—By the showing of Episcopalians, Timothy and Titus were not merely Bishops, but Archbishops; and this preferment of these office-bearers is fatal to the argument derived from their practice against Presbyterian ordination.*

SOME Episcopalian writers, without contending that Timothy and Titus are called apostles in the New

* Works, vol. i., pp. 594, 595. London, 1741.

† Whately on the Kingdom of Christ, pp. 276, 277.

Testament, yet lay great stress on their ministry as having been prelatic. These teachers were indeed honoured and eminent servants of Christ; and if modern bishops could establish a good title to their position and its powers, the defence of Presbyterian parity might be abandoned as hopeless. Everything that Paul could do in person he orders these office-bearers to do in his absence. They are commissioned to set churches in order, to prove and examine deacons, to ordain both deacons and elders, to suppress heterodoxy, punish offenders, and enforce a pure administration of word and sacraments. They exhibit, in relation to the churches, a supreme power; but then, in relation to Paul, they present a not less unqualified subordination. 'They were attached,' says Mr F. W. Newman,* 'to the person of the apostle, and not to any one church.' His presidency did not terminate with their ordination; he continued to direct them. He told them what they were to do, and how they were to do it; he sent them, and he sent for them. Like a master speaking to servants, he said, Go, and they went; or do this, and they did it; and all their movements he made subsidiary to his own. This charge I commit unto thee—These things I write that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself—I charge thee—Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me—Take Mark, and bring him with thee—For this cause left I thee in Crete—These things speak and exhort—When I shall send

* Late Fellow of Bal. Col., Oxford. See Dr Kitto's Cyclop., art. Bishop.

Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis, etc. This is the language of authoritative direction; and as we can have no more superintendents of churches and church rulers themselves superintended by an apostle, we equally despair of replacing Timothy as of replacing Paul. The functions of Timothy, I repeat, *had a dependence as well as a supremacy; in the absence of either we have not the same office-bearer.* Timothy was exhorted to do the work of an evangelist; as Titus did the same work, the presumption is that he was an evangelist also. That in the primitive church there was a class of office-bearers distinctively called Evangelists—though Dr Onderdonk disputes the point—appears farther from Eph. iv. 11: 'And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.' Such evangelists, while adapting themselves in other respects to the functions of the apostles whom they aided, had a remarkable accordance with them in this, that both classes of ministers fulfilled their ministry at large. Strenuous efforts have indeed been made to find Sees for Timothy and Titus. It has been often asserted and resolutely argued that Timothy was Bishop of Ephesus, and Titus of Crete. But these assertions and arguments have little plausibility; the simplest reading of the New Testament shows them to be forced in the extreme. 'I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus.' Was it needful or decent to beseech a bishop to abide in his diocese? If so, the vice of clerical absenteeism, as has been often observed, had a very early and

respectable origin. 'For this cause left I thee in Crete.' Is a bishop in his diocese from being left there? and is he left there for a particular object, and not to fulfil all the duties of his episcopate? The epistles bear that the parties addressed had been fellow-travellers with Paul, and they are required to make all despatch to rejoin him in his journeys. In other portions of the New Testament we find them at various places with the apostle, and sharing in all the changefulness of his eventful pilgrimage. In the last notice we have of Timothy, Paul enjoins him to repair to Rome, 'in words which prove,' says Mr Newman, 'that Timothy was not, at least as yet, Bishop of Ephesus, or of any other church.' * This view of the subject is well put by Dodwell, one of the stoutest champions of Episcopacy. 'Many arguments prove that the office of Timothy was not fixed, but itinerary. That he had been requested to abide still at Ephesus, is testified by the apostle, (1 Tim. i. 3.) He was therefore, when requested, an itinerary. His work of an evangelist is proof to the same effect, (2 Tim. iv. 5.) His journeys so numerous with Saint Paul, and the junction of his name, in common with the apostle, in the inscriptions of the epistles to the Thessalonians, furnish similar proofs. In like manner, the same apostle commands Titus, and him only, to ordain, in Crete, elders in every city, (Tit. i. 5.) He says that he had been left to set in order things that were wanting. He must have been a companion

* Dr Kitto's Cyclop., art. Bishop.

of Paul when he was left. And truly other places also teach us that he was a companion of Saint Paul, and no more restricted to any certain locality than the apostle himself.' * It is true that Timothy was at Ephesus, and did important work there. But the same can be asserted with at least equal truth of his apostolic superior: 'Watch, and remember, that, by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.' † When Paul could so speak to the Ephesian elders, why is he not forthwith proclaimed Bishop of Ephesus? ‡ In these early times, Paul, Timothy, and other fellow-travellers, were occasionally together in the same place, so that a single congregation were favoured temporarily with

* Parænesis, sect. x. pp. 40, 41. London, 1704.

† Acts xx. 31.

‡ There is the same sort of reason for calling Paul Bishop of Ephesus, as James Bishop of Jerusalem. 'The power of James,' observes Stillingfleet in his Irenicum, 'was of the same nature with that of the apostles themselves. And who will go about to degrade them so much as to reduce them to the office of ordinary bishops? James, in all probability, did exercise his apostleship the most at Jerusalem, where, by the scriptures, we find him resident; and from hence the church afterwards, because of his not travelling abroad, as the other apostles did, according to the language of their own time, fixed the title of bishop upon him.' 'Such a descent,' says Dr Brown, 'from the office of an apostle, whose diocese was the world, (Matt. xxviii. 19,) to that of a bishop, whose diocese was to be Jerusalem, as Jewell observes, would have been in direct opposition to the command of Christ, and would have been as extraordinary, as Dr Barrow remarks, as if the King of Great Britain were to become Lord Mayor of London.'—*On Puseyite Episcopacy, see Letters XI. and XIII.*

a whole college of diocesans. But to counterbalance this extraordinary privilege, these clergymen of the first order were liable to quit as they had come, in company, and leave a church in the sad situation which Onderdonk ascribes to Ephesus, of having 'no bishop.' Truly it is hard to fit and frame together a primitive order and modern prelacy.

If it be determined that Timothy and Titus were of the hierarchy, much remains to be settled about their hierarchical status. In one view, it would suit best that they were simply bishops. Then it might be inferred, since they ordained and ruled elders, that elders want the right to ordain and rule each other. So Bishops Hobart and Onderdonk will have Timothy and Titus to have been bishops simply. But then the extended range of labour comprised in the career of Timothy, seems to invole a presidency over bishops as well as presbyters. Theodoret, quoted by Episcopalians in proof of the transference of the title bishops from presbyter-bishops to prelatic-bishops, says, in the same passage of which so much is made with so little ground, that 'Titus was the apostle of the Cretians, and Timothy of Asia.' Here Timothy is not simply Bishop of Ephesus, but Apostle of Asia. And even as regards Titus, if the seven churches of a region so limited as the Asia of the New Testament had seven angels, whom Episcopalians hold to have been seven bishops, then surely so considerable an island as Crete had more than one such dignitary? As a matter of fact, the earliest uninspired accounts assign to Crete (of apostolic times) eleven bishops.

This view of the matter alters and elevates the position of Timothy and Titus. They become bishops over bishops; or, as Hammond, Bull, and others frankly say, 'archbishops.' And if Timothy and Titus, being over bishops, were archbishops, what was Paul, to whom the archbishops were subordinate?—A patriarch at least. A rich soil there is here for the hierarchy, when the highest of three orders, viz., bishops, partitions itself into other three—bishops, archbishops, and patriarchs—and only one branch is wanting to complete the tree of the papacy. It is a great preferment to Timothy and Titus from being bishops to be made archbishops; but the gain of the individuals incurs loss to the system. For when they were bishops, the fact of them ordaining was held to show that elders could not ordain—which incapacity of the presbyters brought the bishop into requisition; but now that they are archbishops, the fact of them ordaining will equally show that suffragan bishops cannot ordain, else why should their metropolitan supersede them in the duty? But a bishop without power to ordain presbyters, and needing a superior to do it for him, is a character to be scared from all prelatic territory. So here is a goodly elevation to Timothy and Titus, but demolition and ruin to the argument for episcopal ordination. We need not wonder that many eminent Episcopalians refuse to espouse an argument of which these are the issues. 'The great controversy,' says Dr Whitby, 'concerning this, and the epistles to Timothy, is, whether Timothy and Titus were indeed made bishops—the

one of Ephesus, and the Proconsular Asia; the other of Crete, having authority to make, and jurisdiction over, so many bishops as were in these precincts. Now, of this matter I confess *I can find nothing in any writer of the first three centuries, nor any intimation that they bore that name.* . . . I assert, that if by saying Timothy and Titus were bishops, the one of Ephesus and the other of Crete, we understand that they took upon them these churches or dioceses as their fixed and peculiar charge, in which they were to preside for a term of life, I believe that Timothy and Titus were not thus bishops. . . . There is nothing which proves they did, or were, to exercise these acts of government rather as bishops than evangelists.'*

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## CHAPTER V.

SECT. III.—*The angels of the seven churches of Asia declared to be compeers of the apostles—Some plausibility in the allegation, that they were superior to Presbyters—The Revelation is not a book of easy interpretation—The argument would prove too much for its friends—It is not supported by the use of the word angel in other parts of the Apocalypse—Even in the controverted passage, our Lord sometimes addresses an angel in the plural number—If it were proved that the angels were Bishops, they could only have been Bishops of parishes, and not of dioceses.*

IT remains to say a few words about the angels of the churches of Asia, claimed by Episcopalians as compeers of the apostles, and belonging with them

* Commentary on Titus—Preface.

to the one order—bishops. The angels were stated office-bearers, and they had fixed charges. They are also addressed as having great power and responsibility, without being extraordinary teachers, and without depending for their functions on those of others. In all these views, this plea has plausibility. Whether it has anything more, let the reader judge after pondering the following considerations:—

1. *The Revelation is confessedly an obscure book.* To cite alone its symbolic phraseology against the general, diversified, and unfigurative language of the New Testament scriptures, is to reverse the natural order of explaining the shadowy by the clear and the unclouded.

2. *The argument proves alarmingly much even for its friends.* It not only makes other clergymen *less* than the bishop—it makes them *nothing;* they totally disappear in the absorbing lustre of prelatic ascendancy. The elders of Ephesus, so touchingly addressed by Paul as having all the charge, are now denied a word in furtherance of their success or acknowledgment of their existence. The candlesticks are the churches; the stars, the angels, are bishops; and as for the elders who went to Miletus, or their successors in office, we are left vainly to ask, Where are they? None of Paul's epistles, or Peter's, or those of any other apostle, were in this style. Clement of Rome, in writing to the Corinthians, maintains the prevailing apostolic usage of acknowledging presbyters and deacons alone as stated office-bearers. So does Polycarp, in his epistle to the Philippians, written

about sixty years after Paul's to the same church. Even Ignatius, in his epistle to Polycarp (of which the authenticity is perhaps questionable), though he has been cited as using the same sort of language with John, speaks very differently; for he requires submission from the church of Smyrna to their bishop, with their presbyters and deacons.* And we must come far down in the history of usurpation and tyranny to find *letter*, *decree*, or *bull*, rivalling this forgetfulness of all clergymen except bishops implied in the angelic argument. Is not this rather much to be credited, or even relished; and must there not be some misapprehension in such an exegesis of scripture?

3. *John uses the word angel in other portions of the Apocalypse, where the sense is adverse to the episcopal argument.* The synagogue had functionaries so called, and some seek there the import of the appellation. Certainly no ruler in the synagogue attained to such exclusive consequence as to present the aspect of annihilating his brethren, or wielded any authority beyond the single congregation in which he ministered, and therefore Presbyterians have no party reason for objecting to this reference. But the argument from the synagogue is involved, as we have seen, in much uncertainty; and here it is much safer to collate John's use of the word in some passages with his own use of it in others. Now, the 'angels,' as the learned Joseph Mede observes, 'by a

* Onderdonk, p. 46.

mode of speaking not uncommon in this book, are put for the nations over which they were thought to preside; which appears hence, that they who, by the injunction of the oracle, are *loosed*, are armies of cavalry sent forth to slaughter men.' In such a case, the term angel has not an individual signification, but is representative of multitudes. In more immediate relation to our present purpose, John says, 'I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.'* On this passage, Dr Mason observes, '"Heaven," in this book, is the ascertained symbol of the christian church, from which issue forth the "ministers of grace" to the nations. As this gospel is preached only by *men*, this "angel," who has it to preach to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," must be the symbol of a human ministry. And as it is perfectly evident that no single man can thus preach it, but that there must be a *great company* of preachers to carry it to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," the angel mentioned in the text is, and of necessity must be, the symbol of that *great company*. We might produce other examples; but this is decisive.'† In the fourteenth chapter, then, of the book of Revelation, angel denotes a company of teachers; is it incredible that, in the opening chapters of that book, the same symbol should have the same sense?

* Rev. xiv. 6. † Mason on Episcopacy, p. 108.

4. *In the controverted chapter, our Lord sometimes addresses an angel in the plural number.* I know the reply, that in such cases our Lord passes from the pastor to address the flock—turns from the star to the candlestick. But this key, when it is applied, will not be found so readily to unlock the difficulties as many have seemed to imagine. 'Fear none of those things which THOU shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast SOME OF YOU into prison, that YE may be tried; and YE shall have tribulation ten days: be THOU faithful unto death, and I will give THEE a crown of life.' * The suffering mentioned in the first clause is described in the next two clauses; had this identical suffering different subjects?—now the pastor, now the congregation? To sustain the persecuted in their season of trial, a promise is annexed. A crown of life is to be given—to whom? 'Thee'—the bishop. And were the people to share the tribulation, while the prelate monopolised the recompense? Let any one candidly read the passage, and say whether the reference of 'thou' to the bishop, and 'you' to the flock, does not suppose, within the compass of a verse, frequent violent and inexplicable transitions. But if they are quite natural, they must be of common occurrence. Produce, then, any modern document in which the bishop and the people of his diocese replace each other thus oft and suddenly, without intimation or ceremony, and we shall admit that our existing Episcopacy derives much countenance from

* Rev. ii. 10.

the phraseology in question. If angel stand for a company, or for *one* as *identified with others of the same order*, there is no difficulty. The sense then is, 'Fear none of those things which the eldership of this church shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: but though in the case of any of you a capital punishment should be inflicted for fidelity, still, be faithful unto death, and I will give the martyr a crown of life.'

5. *If it were proved that angel means bishop, and the bishop alone, and that no mention whatever is made of his clergy, or any responsibility of office belonging to them, we should then have bishops, certainly, most potent bishops; but they would be parochial bishops after all, and diocesan Episcopacy would still be in quest of its evidences.* The Asia of John was but a portion of Asia Minor, and the seven churches belonged to as many towns of differing magnitude. No angel had two towns under his charge. But the bishop of a diocese, says Onderdonk, is 'one having power to govern many churches and clergymen.' * The supposition that each of the seven angels governed many churches, is in palpable contradiction to the record. I am not prepared to contend that each church was absolutely, and in every sense, a single congregation. I will endeavour to show elsewhere that this supposition is extreme. Several of the larger of the Asiatic societies had, I doubt not, subdivided themselves, for the sake of

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 16.

convenience, into distinct worshipping associations. But we should pass to an opposite extreme in pronouncing every one of the seven churches to have been a group of churches; and *nobody will assert that the official status of the angel depended on this circumstance as its condition.* If bishops at all, the angels were parochial bishops; but that is to say that they were Presbyterian bishops; for Dr Onderdonk defines such bishops as we acknowledge, and the New Testament speaks of, 'bishops of parishes,' in distinction from 'bishops of dioceses.'* The angel of a single town and circumscribed neighbourhood could only be, at most, what he calls 'the bishop of a parish, or a presbyter.' Thus the angels turn out to be presbyters, and give their evidence for Presbytery, instead of testifying to Prelacy, which had cited them as witnesses. Even when Episcopacy had incontrovertibly sprung up, and attained to considerable growth, it continued for ages to be parochial; its principles, forms, language, were all parochial. Ignatius, the favourite Father with Episcopalians, is equally emphatic as others in enunciating the maxim, One altar, one bishop. '*Εν θυσιαστηριον ὡς εἰς επισκοπος.*' Every altar, and therefore every church had its bishop.† The recently-published work of Hippolytus shows, as Bunsen remarks, that even in his time—the earlier part of the third century—'a town was synonymous with a diocese.'‡

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 16.

† See Campbell on Eccles. Hist., vol. i., p. 211, etc.

‡ Hippolytus and his Age, vol. i., Sec. Postscript, p. 334.

Since much interest is felt in the work to which I have just alluded, and a high importance is attached to the information which it affords regarding the history and constitution of the ancient church, I may be allowed to relieve argument for a little, by giving the reader some account of this remarkable treatise, and of the circumstances under which it is brought before the christian world. My summary of the facts will be collected and condensed from Bunsen's late publication, in four volumes, and expressed for the most part in that author's words. Hippolytus flourished in the reigns of Commodus and Alexander Severus; and as a Roman, he recollects and describes, from his personal knowledge, the secret history of the Church of Rome, under the former of these emperors. He is understood to have suffered martyrdom, A.D. 236, in the first year of the reign of Maximin, or before its close in 238. He was bishop of the harbour of Rome—Portus, and also a presbyter of the Church of Rome; or, in other words, a member of the Roman Presbytery. Photius, the learned patriarch of Constantinople, mentions regarding him that he was a disciple of Irenæus, of whose lectures against heretics he made a synopsis, and thus composed a book on thirty-two heresies, beginning with the Dositheans [Ophites], and going down to Noetus and the Noetians. This book of Hippolytus was lost for many centuries, and has only now been recovered.

'A French scholar and statesman of high merit, M. Villemain, [then minister of Public Instruction,]

sent a Greek [Mynas] to Mount Athos [a mountain of Greece on which there are many monasteries], to look out for new treasures in the domain of Greek literature. The fruits of this mission were deposited, in 1842, in the great national library, already possessed of so many treasures. Among them was a manuscript of no great antiquity, written in the fourteenth century, not on parchment, but on cotton paper; and it was registered as a book "on all Heresies," without any indication of its author or age. The modern date of the manuscript, its anonymousness, and probably, above all, this awful title, deterred the scrutinising eyes of the learned of all nations who glanced over it. It fell to the lot of a distinguished Greek scholar and writer on literature, a functionary of that great institution [the national library], M. Emmanuel Miller, to bring forward the hidden treasure. He was first struck by some precious fragments of Pinder, and of an unknown lyric poet, quoted by the anonymous writer; he transcribed and communicated them, in 1846, to his literary friends in Germany, who, highly appreciating their value, restored the text, and urged him to publish the whole work. It appears that, during this time, M. Miller had looked deeper into the book himself; for in 1850 he offered it to the University Press at Oxford, as a work of undoubted authenticity, and as a lost treatise of Origen against all heresies. The learned men presiding over that noble institution determined to print, and have just published it, thus giving the sanction of their authority, if not to the

authorship, at least to the genuineness of the work. . . . The book was discovered by a Greek sent from Paris, and has been most creditably edited by a French scholar, and very liberally printed by an English university press. The publication has been accomplished by a combination of different nations, and could scarcely, at this time, have been brought about otherwise.' *

The learned are agreed that the recovered work cannot have been written by Origen. Some are disposed to ascribe it to Caius; but Bunsen seems to have shown most decisively that Hippolytus was its author.

Regarding this work I shall have more to say in succeeding chapters. For the present, I remark only in connexion with the topic more immediately in hand, that it unequivocally assigns a bishop to each city, and even to every small town, containing any number of christians. The towns adjacent to Rome, instead of being included in the Roman See, had each its bishop. Portus, besides being the harbour of Rome, may be said to have formed a suburb of Ostia; and yet each of these places was provided with a bishop. The word diocese (διοικησις), having relation to a province, made its entry into ecclesiastical nomenclature at a late period, when the power of bishops, ceasing to be parochial, and becoming provincial, demanded an appropriate designation.†

With the exception of one digression, the foregoing

* For this extract, see vol. i., letter i., p. 9, etc.

† See Campbell on Eccles. History, vol. i., p. 207, etc.

discussion has been condensed as much as possible; but I trust enough has been said to convince a candid inquirer that apostles, evangelists, and apocalyptic angels were not official compeers, and that they cannot possibly be proved to have been one order corresponding with diocesan bishops.

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## CHAPTER VI.

SECT. I.—*Episcopacy invalidates that authority of Presbyters which scripture is careful to establish, more especially as regards government and ordination—The evidence on which Presbyters are denied these functions is almost wholly negative—This mode of proof is not conclusive, and it recoils on Episcopalians.*

A THIRD great objection to the episcopal system is, that it labours to reduce and enfeeble the power of presbyters, which the writers of the New Testament are earnest to uphold. In a particular manner, *it denies to presbyters the functions of government and ordination.* The evidence adduced in support of this position by Episcopalians *is almost wholly negative in its character.* It is not pretended that presbyters are forbidden by scripture, as they are by the decrees of episcopal councils, from discharging such duties. But it is virtually argued, that whatever presbyters cannot be shown, by specific examples, to have done, they of course never did, and were incapable of doing. Have we any such annals of the conduct of ordinary office-bearers in particular churches as to render this prin-

ciple of argumentation safe? Even 'the Acts of the Apostles' give us only some acts of some apostles. Nay, disciplinary acts, on which so much stress is laid, are recorded of Paul only. And if so little is told us of the great champions of the cross, shall we measure the rights of presbyters by the few notices given us of their actual administration? Surely if the general statements and pervading spirit of the New Testament be in favour of a stated and well-sustained rule by presbyters, the inference as to particular functions of superintendence is all in their favour. What should we think of the argument, that, as Paul alone of all the apostles is recorded to have inflicted church censures, therefore the other apostles neither exercised nor possessed this function? Such reasoning would be accounted sufficiently absurd; and yet it is by this plea alone that presbyters are denuded of their authority.

The demand for examples may even recoil on them who make it. Bishop Onderdonk says, 'There are *no* cases recorded of discipline by presbyters.' And shall we conclude, then, that presbyters had no power of rule, and exercised no authority whatever for the maintenance of ecclesiastical purity? No; this would be too much for Episcopacy. 'Doubtless,' says Bishop Onderdonk, 'their elders did [judge] in lighter matters, even to the lesser excommunication.' But if no cases of discipline by elders are recorded, and yet they confessedly did charge themselves with cases of discipline, this shows that we should reason inconclusively by inferring the absence of the power from

the silence of scripture as to its application. Scripture, we are told, *has recorded no cases of discipline by elders*, yet *they did exercise discipline in lesser matters;* why then, though scripture (by supposition) has recorded no such cases, may they not have exercised discipline in greater matters? The total silence of scripture must prove total incapacity in one case as well as another, or the argument is vicious. It will not do to establish a universal conclusion, and then take so much of it as suits our purpose. If the facts be that no cases of discipline by elders are recorded, and yet in some cases elders did exercise discipline, then should not Bishop Onderdonk see that he insists upon more record than suits his own concessions; and that he has got into a province where a full and complete history has not been afforded us?

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## CHAPTER VI.

SECT. II.—*There is evidence that Elders were entrusted with government—This power is expressly ascribed to them—The ascription of it is not accompanied with reservations in behalf of Prelates—The administration of discipline in certain recorded cases was not prelatic—There is sufficient ground to conclude that Elders, besides ruling the flock, exercised inspection over each other.*

THE remarks in the preceding section were made to expose a fallacy in episcopal reasoning, and not to get rid of an appeal which Presbytery is unable to meet. Whether there be a fair and full view of the

power of presbyters in the statement, that no cases of discipline by them are recorded, let the reader decide after pondering the following considerations:—

1. *Scripture ascribes the power of government very unequivocally to elders.* It denotes their administration by the verbs ἡγέομαι, προΐστημι, ποιμαίνω; and we do not find in the New Testament any stronger expressions for ecclesiastical rule. 'Remember them which have the rule over you (τῶν ἡγουμένων ὑμῶν), who have spoken unto you the word of God.'* 'Obey them that have the rule over you (τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν), and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls,' etc. † 'Salute all them that have the rule over you' (πάντας τοὺς ἡγουμένους ὑμῶν.) ‡ Here in the course of one chapter we have the verb ἡγεομαι used three times in relation to numerous stated office-bearers, never to be confounded with diocesan bishops. 'We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you (προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν) in the Lord.'§ 'Let the elders that rule well (προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι) be counted worthy,' etc. ‖ Surely the church in Thessalonica had not a plurality of diocesans labouring among them. In the passage cited from 1 Tim. the rulers are expressly called elders. 'Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (bishops,) to feed (ποιμαίνειν) the church of God.'¶ Paul thus spoke to the Ephesian 'elders.' In after times the bishop alone was ἡγούμενος and προϊσταμενος;

* Heb. xiii. 7. † Ib. 17. ‡ Ib. 24.
§ 1 Thess. v. 12. ‖ 1 Tim. v. 17. ¶ Acts xx. 28.

but the inspired penmen apply these titles to all presbyters without distinction; and is it not a significant fact, that the ambitious and grasping prelacy of subsequent times monopolised the scriptural terms for ordinary presbyterial control as the most emphatic it could get even then for characterising its usurped and lordly dominion?

2. *Scripture does not qualify such ascription of power to elders by any reservations expressive of subordination to higher officers.* The elders of Ephesus convened at Miletus were instructed after what manner to exercise their episcopate; but though informed how to feed the flock, they were not bound over to obey a diocesan. The orders they received had all respect to superintendence of the flock or mutual fidelity, and said nothing of subjection to ministers of a loftier grade. To say that the Ephesian elders were still to obey Paul, though removed from them, as being a bishop at large, is inadmissible, since his very design was to speak of duties which would demand fulfilment when communication with himself should be broken off; and the pathos of the address obviously and confessedly lies in its valedictory character.

The emblems by which the power of presbyters is illustrated in scripture supposes its elevated character. It is likened, for example, to that of heads of families. A bishop, says Paul, must be 'one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?'*

* 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.

The highest power in a family resides in its head. It is by a supreme discipline that he keeps his children in grave subjection. But this rule over one's own house the apostle employs to illustrate the care which presbyter-bishops have of the church; and a proved competency for the former he specifies as a condition of appointment to the latter.

3. *Scripture exhibits to us important cases of discipline not administered by prelates.* Paul says, 'Do not ye judge them that are within?'* 'So, doubtless,' says Bishop Onderdonk, 'their elders did in lighter matters, even to the lesser excommunication.' Whether the judgment Paul speaks of had respect to lighter matters, may be seen from the context: 'I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.' This is the eleventh verse, and the apostle asks in the twelfth, 'Do not ye judge them that are within?' A clause, indeed, is interposed in the beginning of the latter verse: 'For what have I to do to judge them that are without?' This intimates simply that the judgment spoken of was not for parties without the church. If any that was called a brother, as being a church member, was a fornicator, etc., then the case came under ecclesiastical cognisance, and *it belonged to the parties addressed to judge such offenders as those within its communion.* In the next verse the

* 1 Cor. v. 12.

apostle insists on the ejection of the fornicator who had his father's wife. The context, therefore—in what precedes and what follows—plainly shows, that when the apostle says, 'Do not ye judge them that are within?' his language comprises matters of judgment of the gravest description.

But 'the action of Paul,' says Dr Onderdonk, 'in this case, shows that they (the Corinthians) did not inflict the greater excommunication.'* How can it show so much? This conclusion is broader than the premises. The action of Paul proved only that *where discipline was neglected* he could interfere and cause it to be enforced. 'Wherefore put away from among yourselves,' he says, 'that wicked person.' Has a sea captain no command of a ship—has he not, in ordinary circumstances, the supreme command of his ship—because an admiral may interpose at a time a superior authority to punish misconduct or reward merit among the crew? The language of Paul, as has been justly observed by Mr Barnes, supposes that the church of Corinth did usually exercise discipline; nay, that it ought to have done so in this case. How was the society implicated in the crime of an individual unless by their neglect of discipline? Their offence plainly was, that the offender had not with mourning been 'taken away from among' them.

Dr Onderdonk weakly replies by citing acknowledgments about the imperfect qualifications of the

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 15.

first elders. Such imperfection might render proper an occasional supervision of their authority without destroying it altogether, or superseding it in ordinary circumstances.

It is quite conceivable that churches (whether acting collectively or through elders) might be usually charged with discipline, and yet in the infant state of the christian cause, and when their own conversion was recent, might need the interposition at times of a superior direction. Certainly no stray discussion about the capacity or incapacity of any parties can set aside the explicit language of Paul in the chapters under consideration. He unequivocally complains to those whom he addresses, that the perpetrator of the foul deed had not been excommunicated. To prevent similar neglect in future, he says, verse 7, 'Purge out, therefore, the old leaven,' etc. The old leaven was to be purged out *by them*, though *at his instigation*, and that the 'old leaven' does not refer to this one crime alone, but in general *to such criminalities*, is plain from verse 8: 'Therefore let us keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness [most comprehensive terms], but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul reverts to this case of offence, which, in consequence of his prior expostulation, had been visited with adequate if not extreme correction. 'Sufficient to such a man,' he says, 'is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him,' etc.*

* 2 Cor. ii.

Shortly after, and in the same connexion, he says, 'to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also.' Not only does the apostle in this language leave it with the Corinthians themselves to forgive the offender or discharge him from corrective discipline; but he generalises his language—'to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also.' So often as you see meet thus to release offenders from disciplinary punishment, you have my approval and concurrence.

On a review of this proof, it appears that churches uncontrolled by prelates judged them that were within. Even where Paul interfered to correct irregularities, he intimates how like matters ought to be proceeded with in the absence of such express and direct interference. His language cannot be understood of a personal bearing towards offenders; for it is not the phraseology of private intercourse, and it occurs, besides, in the midst of statements and instructions about ecclesiastical discipline. Nor is there room for pretending that the judgment so exercised had respect to light matters; for it is spoken of in immediate connexion with heinous and aggravated trespasses. Paul exerted his apostolic authority in requiring that a certain offender should be brought under discipline. Even then, however, he did not inflict the corrective punishment, but left the infliction of it to others. His language implies, *that they should have set about it sooner, and that his remonstrance and interference were occasioned by their culpable remissness.* When they had subjected the offender to adequate censure, and passing perhaps from one extreme to another, had become

over zealously severe, Paul recommends a relaxation of rigour and an extension of mercy. And to prevent in future the undue acerbation or prolongation of such discipline, he gives them the general assurance that so often as punishment led to penitence, they had his cordial concurrence in the exercise of clemency. Let any one read with candour the epistles to the Corinthians, and say whether such be not their import and spirit in relation to the subject in debate; and whether, in consequence, they do not utterly explode the alleged dependence of discipline on prelacy.

In the preceding remarks I have allowed it to be supposed that church discipline might be administered either by the members collectively, or by selected functionaries, because the settlement of that point belongs to another part of the argument; and in reasoning with the advocates of Episcopacy, it is enough for me to show that offenders can be dealt with, and even the gravest discipline administered, without the help of a diocesan bishop.

One void may seem to remain. Though elders ruled the flock, where is the proof that they ruled each other? Where do we hear in scripture of presbyters having brother presbyters under their jurisdiction? We have shown that government and discipline in general are assigned to elders; and if we have made good the rule, it lies with those who deem it to be limited to establish their exceptions. Elders have authority—a general authority—emphatically and unrestrictedly ascribed to them: where is the

proof that such authority does not include a mutual inspection? Above all, where is the command to a presbyter to obey his diocesan? Any indications which scripture furnishes on the subject look in another direction. In addressing the Ephesian elders, Paul said, 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock.' The elders were to look to their own order, while maintaining church order. What follows is yet more explicit: 'For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them, therefore watch.' No doubt each elder was here instructed to be on his guard, lest the awful prediction of evil should be fulfilled in himself. But when Paul speaks of calamities to the flock, and enjoins watching in relation to wolves, who can imagine all the duty enforced to be exhausted when an elder was simply careful not to be a wolf? Was he to see wolves come and to stand by while these depredators committed their ravages unrestrained? Paul forewarns elders of these destroyers, and speaks of no higher, no other functionaries than elders by whom the destruction may be precluded or qualified. *A degenerate ministry is the evil:* the *watchfulness of elders is the remedy*, and *the only remedy* specified by the apostle.

The reader may naturally be desirous to know what light the newly-discovered work of Hippolytus sheds on the powers of presbyters, and their participation in discipline during the earlier centuries of the

christian era. We learn from it that there was a Roman presbytery, of which Hippolytus and other suburban bishops were members. To suppose that the teachers of such inconsiderable places were all diocesan bishops, would require surely an effort of imagination. The governing presbytery, however, included many members resident in Rome. There could not be numerous diocesans in the same city. Nor is Hippolytus the only writer who, in relation to that period, bears witness to these facts. 'We have,' says Bunsen, 'in Cornelius' Letter about Novatian, the official list of the clergy of the city of Rome.'* This letter being of the year 250, the presbytery can scarcely have differed in its principal features from that of which Hippolytus was a member some twenty years earlier. 'There were under Cornelius, at Rome, forty-two priests (or presbyters) and seven deacons. . . . These persons, therefore, formed the presbytery. According to the 35th Apostolical Canon the bishops of the suburban towns, including Portus, also formed at that time an integral part of the Roman Presbytery, called in later times the College of Cardinals.'† On such grounds Bunsen concludes that 'the Ecclesiastical Polity' of these times 'may be termed Presbyterianism.'‡ But what sort of governing functions did the Presbytery fulfil? Bunsen says, 'All weighty affairs evidently passed still through the Presbytery; only the decree of the Presbytery of the Roman Church could expel from its communion.' A

* Euseb. H. E. vi. 43.

† Hipp. and his Age, vol. i., let. v., pp. 310, 311. ‡ Ib. p. 307.

writer in the last number of the Edinburgh Review, art. i., p. 16, says, 'Hippolytus speaks of himself being officially concerned in expelling some persons from the Roman Church. In the treatise against the heresy of Noetus, he (Hippolytus) states that the Presbytery summoned Noetus before their church, and questioned him as to his tenets, and ultimately expelled him from the church.' This was not surely a power of discipline 'in lesser matters,' or in relation to private members.*

* As regards the points of difference between Presbyterians and Congregationalists which have been already discussed, I do not find that Bunsen adduces anything very decisive from Hippolytus, or that the expression of his own opinions is very clear and consistent. He says, 'The elders are teachers and administrators. If an individual happen to be engaged in either of these offices more exclusively than the other, it makes no real alteration in his position; for the presbyters of the ancient church filled both situations.' This language seems to intimate that all elders were from the first both teachers and rulers, although some might exclusively occupy themselves with one of these departments. (Vol. iii., p. 246.) Elsewhere he declares that, 'In the earliest church the office of teacher was open to all. Every one taught to whom the Spirit gave the vocation. By degrees the office of the elders became an office of teachers.'—(Page 185.) Here we are informed that in the first instance none were officially teachers. Elders, in their official capacity, exclusively ruled; they were, in other words, ruling elders. By degrees official teachers found admission among these elders; at which stage of (supposed) transition teaching elders and ruling elders would form together one council or session. It seems to me that some ordinances of the ancient church, which Mr Bunsen supplies in his third volume, point to an order of elders expressly appointed for superintendence. In the first set of ordinances of the church of Alexandria respect-

## CHAPTER VI.

SECT. III.—*On Ordination as a service claimed by Prelates—The nature of the rite does not show that it is unsuitable for Presbyters—The refusal of this power to Presbyters is inconsistent with the argument for three orders founded by Episcopalians on the Constitution of the Old Testament Church—No arguments against Presbyterate Ordination can be derived from Ordination by Apostles and Evangelists—Presbyters are not interdicted by scripture from Ordaining—The state of the Pastorate in Apostolic times indicates that Apostles were not the only ordainers—An instance of ordination by Presbyters is recorded in the New Testament—The right of Elders to ordain is confirmed by history—Result of the argument.*

THE prelatic system denies to presbyters the right of ordaining. Episcopalians attach great importance to this position, and lay much stress on the proof which they adduce on its behalf. Perhaps the reader will

ing the clergy, we have instructions 'How a bishop is to be elected, and what is required of him.' Thereafter it is provided, 'that the bishop is to ordain two, or rather three presbyters.'—(Page 35, etc.) If only a dozen persons in a place were able to contribute to the support of a bishop, his election was to be proceeded with; and while the congregation had 'still to be formed,' as Bunsen remarks, page 220, 'the bishop named elders.' Could preaching elders, additional to the bishops, be needed under such circumstances? These ordinances expressly require that the bishop be 'able to explain the scriptures well:' the elders are not said to instruct the people except to be 'all in subjection;' in other words, they were to preserve order.

In respect to the rights of church members, Bunsen tells us that in the days of Hippolytus the only vestige of popular liberty that was left lay in a tumultuous veto on the appointment of bishops. And what of the power of the people in earlier times?

not consider it so very strong if he duly weigh the following observations.

1. *The reasonableness of refusing to presbyters the power of ordaining does not appear from the nature of ordination.* In being ordained, a person is regularly set apart to official duty. They who ordain him thereby affix the seal of their approbation in the most solemn manner to the appointment, while they invoke for him the aid of that Spirit who divideth to every man severally as he will. If the individual who is the subject of ordination has the countenance of brethren already established in office and character, and through their prayers is strengthened with all strength by the Spirit in the inner man, he will not be deficient in sanc-

Mr Bunsen says, the 'congregation was governed and directed by a council of elders, which congregational council, at a later period, was presided over, in most churches, by a governing overseer—the bishop. But the ultimate decision in important emergencies rested with the whole congregation: bishops and elders were its superintending members—its guides, but not its masters.'—(Page 220.) And who was to decide what emergencies were important, so as to bring these cases, and these only, before the whole congregation? or by what decisions regarding these emergencies was the *ultimate* decision preceded? Surely 'the whole congregation' was not a court of review, which sat in judgment on appeals from the inferior council of elders. This is not meant; but I do not see what meaning precisely is designed to be conveyed. Mr Bunsen tells us elsewhere that Clement of Rome wrote his epistle to the Corinthians about twenty years before the gospel of John was written, exhorting them to respect the well-founded right of venerable elders; and that '*the Philippians appear to have lived under the same aristocratic constitution* when Polycarp addressed his epistle to them.' He asserts with axiomatic explicitness, that 'bishops and elders are essentially rulers,' and that 'rulers must

tion or encouragement. The service may have been accompanied in primitive times with the impartation of preternatural endowments, qualifying the person for the trust committed to him. On such occasions hands were imposed; and we know that the imposition of hands was significant in many instances of the communication of the Holy Ghost. His gifts were certainly most needed by office-bearers in the church who sustained a principal charge and responsibility; and there is nothing improbable in the supposition that these gifts may have been conferred in special abundance when new obligations were in the act of being undertaken. Of this miraculous nature probably was the gift that was in Timothy, 'which was

have power.'—(Page 245.) I have already endeavoured to show what confusion results from such representations, giving presidency now to the people, and now to the pastor; how little countenanced they are by scripture; and how fatal the attempt to carry them into effect proves to the liberties of christian societies. If, through any misapprehension, I am doing Mr Bunsen injustice, I shall be glad to be shown my error. It is evidently his desire to state facts undisguisedly, and to prefer divine truth to all human systems and human favour. I regret that he has introduced into his four elaborate volumes speculations on different points about which Hippolytus confessedly says nothing, and about which, as the Edinburgh Reviewer observes, information has been derived 'from other sources.' This is a plan no doubt which the author was entitled to adopt; but a distinct, candid, and compendious view of the additional knowledge furnished to church history by the recently-discovered work of Hippolytus remains in consequence a desideratum. That a Roman Presbytery existed in the time of Hippolytus, and that the presbyters exercised discipline in matters great as well as small, are facts unequivocally attested in the work 'Against all Heresies.'

given him by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.'* Taking this view of the subject, some have hence questioned whether the imposition of hands in ordination, as practised by the apostles and their fellow-labourers, had not exclusive reference to extraordinary endowments, and ought not to be dispensed with when these endowments have ceased. The Church of Scotland, under the guidance of its Reformer, John Knox, discarded for a time this symbolic act. 'Albeit,' says the First Book of Discipline, 'the apostles used the imposition of hands, yet seeing the miracle is ceased, the using the ceremony we judge not to be necessary.' We still need, however, the aids of the Spirit; they are specially needful to ministers of the Word; and the imposition of hands may fitly indicate our dependence on His help, and express our desire and prayer that it may be vouchsafed to us. There is no evidence that the imposition of hands denoted spiritual influence of only one kind—only the miraculous to the exclusion of the sanctifying agency of the Holy Ghost—and why then should not the rite be retained as symbolic of divine succours, which are still afforded us?

I have said that in being ordained, a person is set apart *to official duty*. The more essential idea may seem to be, that he is set apart *to office;* and I do not object to this mode of expression. Only we find in the early and inspired history of the christian church that persons already in office, without being preferred

* 1 Tim. iv. 14.

to any other office, were sometimes set apart with all the form and solemnity of an ordination to some particular appointment. The Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.'* As regards presbyters, it is of importance to remark, that they were ordained not to office in the abstract, or to be executed anywhere, but to official oversight in a particular church. Nor was ordination restricted to spiritual office-bearers, ordinary and extraordinary; we find that deacons charged with the serving of tables were also ordained. In all cases the service was conducted by ecclesiastical rulers, who also pointed out the qualifications indispensable to the office which was to be filled. But the people were not therefore slighted or superseded. They had the right of choosing their office-bearers.† The multitude, after suitable instructions regarding the sort of candidates to

* Acts xiii. 2, 3.

† It is curious to observe how much importance is attached by Episcopalians to the imposition of hands in the ordination of office-bearers, and how little to the elevation of hands in their election. 'The charm of the succession,' says one of the most esteemed writers of our day, 'must be ascribed to a mysterious virtue derived from the hands of the apostles—but the apostles did not lay on hands arbitrarily—the Cheirothesia (to use a Greek term familiar with the readers of the Greek New Testament, and of Harrington) required to be preceded by the Cheirotonia: none were ordained who were not popularly elected. Where there is no foundation, there is no superstructure; where the beginning is wanting, the consummation is wanting also.'—(Popery and Infidelity, by J. Douglas of Cavers, p. 12.)

the will of God even more clearly than usual forms. But ordinary forms are for ordinary circumstances most valuable, and they should never be neglected when they can be observed. Therefore, in churches having rulers, these rulers should formally ordain, or solemnly set apart, to the ministry those qualified individuals whom the church calls to the office.

If there be more in ordination, what is it? The most vague notions about its efficacy have been widely entertained. It has been regarded as imprinting a character thereafter ineffaceable, save to the hand of Omnipotence. The Council of Trent was much occupied in determining wherein this character consists, and whereon it is imprinted. Dr Campbell, who gives an amusing summary of the points in debate, says, 'The whole of what they agreed on amounts to this, that something—they know not what—is imprinted—they know not how—on something in the soul of the recipient—they know not where—which can never be deleted.' * Few Protestants will care to enter into such disquisitions. But many who speak loudly against Rome share its mysterious ideas about ordination. They regard it as fixing on the ordained a hallowed signature, at once imperceptible, incomprehensible, and ineffaceable. In this mood they are quite prepared to make prelates the ordainers; for they readily believe that high functionaries must be needed to produce in a man this remarkable metamorphosis, by which he is for ever

* On Church Hist., vol. i., p. 365.

discriminated from ordinary men, and imbued with a certain sacred inscrutable officiality. Bishop Onderdonk, with all his enlightenment, talks obscurely enough on this subject. He states that 'what is given in ordination is given unreservedly, and it is never, except for discipline, retracted, or suspended, or modified by the giver or givers,' etc. We desire the opening pronoun of this enunciation to be explained —to be replaced by its noun or nouns. Unveil to us the 'what' of ordination, and then we shall see, peradventure, how it is given, and may discern its compatibility or incompatibility with reservation, retraction, suspension, or modification, by giver or givers.

To those who consider ordination a sacred inscrutable something, standing absolutely by itself, and insusceptible of being denoted save by its one awful name, I recommend a careful perusal of the following passage from Dr Davidson:—

'The word *ordain*, as employed to denote designation or setting apart to the duties of an office connected with the christian religion, is represented by six different terms in the original Greek.

'"Jesus *ordained* twelve to be with him," ἐποίησε δώδεκα. Mark iii. 14.

'"Must one *be ordained* to be a witness," γενέσθαι. Acts i. 22.

'"And when they *had ordained* them elders in every church," χειροτονήσαντες. Acts xiv. 23.

'"By that man whom he *hath ordained*," ὥρισε. Acts xvii. 31.

'"Whereunto I *am ordained* a preacher," ἐτέθην. 1 Tim. ii. 7.

'"That thou shouldest *ordain* elders in every city," καταστήσῃς. Titus i. 5.

'This induction affords an intimation, that ordination, in the *scriptural* sense of the term, differs from ordination in the *current* use of it. At the present day, it denotes something talismanic and mysterious—a certain undefinable process which metamorphoses a layman into a clergyman. A wondrous virtue or efficacy is assumed to lie in the act which it is employed to express. But had this been the New Testament usage, we should have expected that one word only in the Greek would have been uniformly adopted. A thing of so much importance and efficacy must have had its own appropriate representative. Six different verbs could scarcely have been found to symbolise a single transaction of unique character.'*

If in ordination a person is simply set apart, in an orderly manner, to official trust, then no reason appears, in the nature of the case, why presbyters should not ordain presbyters. A prelate is exalted, no doubt, in being made the exclusive depository of this power. But it is not the spirit of the bible to make distinctions in themselves arbitrary, and having no practical use, except to depress one class of office-bearers, and elevate the consequence of an ecclesiastical superior.

2. *The refusal to presbyters of the right to ordain*

* Eccl. Pol., pp. 219, 220.

*is incongruous with the appeal often made in behalf of Prelacy to the constitution of the Old Testament church.* Episcopalians have laid great stress on the analogy subsisting between their ministry, in three orders, and the Mosaic ministry, consisting of High Priest, Priests, and Levites. It has been often and zealously contended, that the former ministry typically foreshadowed the latter. This argument has been shown to be so feeble in its grounds, and so calamitous in its consequences, that it is getting out of favour apparently with its friends. The priests were typical of Christ. If we say that they were also types of the christian ministry, then christian ministers are priests, and in their priestly character must have somewhat sacrificial to offer. Nay, being the antitypes—the substance foreshadowed—they behove to offer *true sacrifices*, and to ground on them true and effective mediation; and all this to the exclusion or disparagement of the Lamb of God, and the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. In the New Testament, sacerdotal terms, such as priest, priesthood, sacrifice, are never applied to christian ministers and their functions. When we think how familiar the writers were with such phraseology, and how prone they must have been to use it, if its use had been still allowable, we are led, with Archbishop Whately and others, irresistibly to conclude that they designedly withheld it, as absolutely inapplicable to the functions and the institutions of the evangelical dispensation.

We cannot admit, then, that the Aaronic priest-

hood prefigured christian pastors as a priesthood. But we do admit that the ancient priesthood constituted a regular and duly-appointed ministry. Whatever was essential to the status of a clergyman was surely to be met with in that economy of exact and ample ceremonial. Was it needful, then, to the ministry of the second order under the law that they should be ordained or invested with office by the high priest, constituting in himself the highest order? No; ministers of the second degree did all that was necessary to the induction of equals into office. As regards the high priest, he could not, in the nature of the case, be ordained by a compeer; for while the Mosaic ordinances were observed, there could not be two such office-bearers contemporaries. Till the Sanhedrim latterly invested the ecclesiastical head of the nation with his high-priestly robes, the priests did all that was required for the regular installation of the high priest, their superior. How comes it, then, that service of the nature of ordination can no longer be conducted by the second order? to use the language and speak on the principles of Episcopalians; and whence is it that a spiritual dispensation is here more jealous about grades first, second, and third, than was the ritual dispensation itself?

3. *That apostles and evangelists sometimes ordained, is no proof that elders never did, and might not, ordain.* The churches when newly formed had no elders, nor for some time afterwards. Gifts supplied the place of offices, and private members exercised freely the privilege of exhorting one another and comforting

one another. With the apostles it was an express rule not to appoint a novice, or recent convert, to the eldership. Ordination by apostles might, therefore, indicate not the *incapacity* of elders for this service, but simply the *want* of them. Even if churches had elders, there might be sufficient reason why apostles, if present, should, in the exercise of a higher superintendence, *ordain* just as they *preached*, in lieu of the teaching eldership, or should *take a prominent lead* in fulfilling this duty.

4. *Presbyters are nowhere in the New Testament interdicted from ordaining.* Such prohibitions have been plentiful in ecclesiastical decrees of more recent date. One of them, found in the apostolic writings, would have been very appropriate and very precious for the vindication of prelacy. Presbyters are instructed to rule, and churches to obey them, but neither presbyters nor churches are here pointed to an important reservation in the instructions, or warned by precept or proposition that a diocesan bishop is the sole ordainer in the christian economy.

5. *The accounts given us of the state of the pastorate, in a proportion of the primitive churches, appears incompatible with the doctrine, that apostles alone ordained to the pastoral office.* In the age of the apostles many false teachers and wicked men found their way into the ministry. We cannot easily explain why such persons in such numbers were able to enter the ministerial office, if the door of entrance had been kept exclusively by apostles. The churches were blamed for heaping up to themselves unsuitable

teachers; but how was the impropriety possible, and why was not caution duly enforced in another quarter, if apostles only might ordain? Why blame the churches only, and not the ordainers also, and rather? The matter of reproach, let it be also observed, was simply that such teachers were sought and relished, and not that apostles were superseded in the mode of their appointment—not that they had entered otherwise than under the hand of a diocesan. Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, 'I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.'* But how could these wolves get in if only Paul or some brother apostle might admit them? The inference from such considerations is, that the agency engaged in ordinations was not always apostolic, and that where churches and their stated pastorate were in a wrong state, the usual mode of appointment to office rendered possible and easy the introduction of very objectionable office-bearers.

6. *Though little is recorded in the New Testament of the actual administration of presbyters, mention is made of presbyterial ordination.* Paul says, 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.'† The gift that was in Timothy, as has been already remarked, probably included with office preternatural qualifications for its duties. It had been prophesied of him that he would be such a gifted labourer. The prophecy was fulfilled, through the laying on of the

* Acts xx. 29. † 1 Tim. iv. 14.

hands of the presbytery. Ingenuity has been tasked to the utmost to get rid of this example of ordination by presbyters. Bishop Onderdonk thinks that the laying on of the hands of the presbytery on Timothy may have been connected not with his ordination, but with some missionary appointment, such as was assigned, in a similar manner, to Paul and Barnabas. But the two events are spoken of in very different terms. Nor is there any mention of a particular missionary assignation in the case of Timothy. The language of Paul in relation to him appears quite detached from any special commission—occurring among general counsels, and designed to stimulate him in the habitual discharge of official duty.

Should the language in question have respect to ordination, Bishop Onderdonk thinks that the word *presbytery* may denote *the office* to which Timothy was ordained, and not the *persons who ordained* him. It was a laying on of hands to confer the presbyteryship, or office of presbyter. Calvin, in his Institutes, noticed this interpretation favourably, but he afterwards revoked his approval of it in his Commentary. Will Bishop Onderdonk really accept of this explanation of the passage? Will he admit the office of Timothy to have been that of presbyter? No; this rendering is no sooner sanctioned to get rid of ordaining presbyters, than it must be moulded and mutilated into accordance with Prelacy. The *presbyterial office*, contends the Bishop, must here mean *the clerical office*, without specification of grade; and when Paul names the presbyteryship, he must have

intended the apostleship! But Bishop Onderdonk has not produced a single passage, either from the New Testament or from the Fathers, in which the word rendered by our translators *presbytery* means undefinedly *clerical office*. When the word, in its Latinised form, denotes office in ancient writers, it is always specifically the office of presbyter. This translation, then, is adverse to Episcopacy, for it assigns to Timothy the office of presbyter, and makes all the ordinations which he presided over presbyterial, and not prelatical.

But is the rendering now discussed at all admissible? Did Paul not mean to be specific, and did he merely remind Timothy—as the least noted elder or deacon might have been reminded—that he held an official trust? The stress of obligation, it seems, is laid on the office, and yet the office is not specified!

There is no need for straining after such improbable interpretations. In the absence of controversy, the word presbytery would at once be understood to denote a council composed wholly or mainly of presbyters. It occurs three times in the New Testament. In two of these instances it denotes the Sanhedrim, or assembled elders of the Jews. 'As soon as it was day,' says Luke, 'the elders [the presbytery] of the people . . . led him into their council.'* No one thinks of proving that presbytery here means, or can mean, something else than a deliberative body taking its name from presbyters as its members. 'The high

* Luke xxii. 66.

priest,' said Paul, speaking from the stair of the castle, by the permission of the chief captain, 'doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders,'*—all the presbytery. Who tries to establish that presbytery here denotes a certain office, and not office-bearers, or then a class of functionaries among whom presbyters had no place? It is the same word which Paul employs when he speaks of the laying on of the hands of the presbytery; and if it denoted a company of elders in the examples formerly noticed, we naturally suppose that it does the same here. The early christian fathers frequently call the deliberative council of a particular church its presbytery. Even when the imposition of a bishop's hands came long after to be pronounced the essential act in ordination, elders were permitted to impose hands with the bishop, in evident allusion to the passages now commented on, to avoid open collision with apostolic usage. 'The sense of the word πρεσβυτερος' [presbyter,] says Principal Campbell, 'as well as the application of the word πρεσβυτεριον [presbytery] in other places to a convention of those called πρεσβυτεροι [presbyters,] determines the sense of the word in this passage; and, indeed, all christian antiquity concurs in affixing this name to what may be called the consistory of a particular church, or the college of its pastors.' †

Suppose that the word presbytery might signify something else than a council of elders, why leave this more obvious sense, sanctioned as it is by New

* Acts xxii. 5. † On Eccles. Hist., vol. i., p. 132.

Testament usage, and search about for other possible meanings, unless it is determined beforehand that presbyters shall not ordain, and that scripture shall not countenance such ordination?

There is no collision between the views which have just been offered and the words of Paul: 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.'* On the understanding that the same act of ordination is here intended, we learn that Paul was a party to it; but so was each member of the presbytery, or one of the passages contradicts the other. Any office-bearer who takes part in an ordination bears the responsibility of it, and may fitly speak of it as his own act, especially when he claims attention, on the ground of it, to his own exhortations. Such language would have a peculiar propriety, if, as is probable, Paul presided on the occasion.

What other solution can we adopt? That Paul ordained, say prelatists, and that the presbytery merely signified assent. This explanation is arbitrary. It is extremely unlikely that the identical act should, to several parties simultaneously engaged in it, have totally different significations; and there is not a syllable in scripture which countenances the notion. Wherever the purpose of imposing hands is indicated, it is something very distinguishable from mere concurrence. In this case, if in any case, the imagination is totally inadmissible; for how can it be

* 2 Tim. i. 6.

conceived that in one of the passages cited, Paul should have mentioned *the presbytery*, and *the presbytery alone*, if the act of the presbyters was a mere adjunct to the service?

Bishop Onderdonk, after rejecting the conclusions drawn from this passage in favour of presbyterial ordination, contrasts with its 'shadows, clouds, and darkness,' the noon-tide radiance of the episcopal argument. 'Timothy and Titus,' he says, 'had the ordaining power individually. Timothy was to have it "till the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," the end of the world; that is, such ministers as Timothy were to be perpetuated while the earthly church should endure—what he had received of Paul was to be "committed to faithful men" successively. Is there any flaw in this chain of proofs? do any reasonable doubts obscure this argument from scripture? No: we aver it to be as clear as any matter of doctrine or discipline drawn from that holy volume. This is enough for an inductive proof of episcopal ordination.' * Here very much is assumed, and not a little is unintentionally conceded. First, it is taken for granted that what Timothy was to keep till the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ was the ordaining power. We have only to read the passage in its connexion, to see that the apostle had his thoughts on far different topics: 'But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 80.

good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.' * Secondly, it is taken for granted that Timothy here represents an order of ministers holding the identical office to the close of time. But no language could be more pointedly personal than that which Paul employs: 'I give thee charge that thou keep.' In terms so precise does the apostle urge on Timothy his individual preparation for the appearance of Christ. Accordingly, Bishop Onderdonk says elsewhere, 'till the appearing of Jesus Christ, *i.e.*, till Timothy's own death.' † If we were to generalise the passage, we should apply it to all to whom it is applicable; and surely all ministers, irrespectively of 'grades,' have need to exemplify that sustained fidelity which Paul here inculcates, as they would have confidence, and not be ashamed before Christ at his coming. Thirdly, it is assumed that what Timothy received from Paul was to be committed to faithful men successively, in the sense of perpetuating through successors the apostleship. The word *successively* is not in the text; it is not Paul's, but Bishop Onderdonk's. Paul requires only that the men, whether associates or suc-

* 1 Tim. vi. 11–14. † Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. 73.

cessors, shall be faithful. The stress is laid, not on *succession*, but on *fidelity*. In appointing men, says the apostle, look to their faithfulness. And what if the men should not be faithful? What if they should be in the last degree faithless? What if they should corrupt Christ's doctrine, tyrannise over his people, lead dissolute lives, and make no use of their sacred office but to aid and screen their multiplied abominations? When the faithfulness of which Paul speaks is wanting, does the succession hold good? Is that which Paul alone insists upon of so little consequence that it can be dispensed with, and these faithless functionaries may still impart the apostolic virtue? Nay, and it depends on the touch of their polluted fingers for transmission and preservation!*

* Some strange examples of the 'faithful men' through whom apostolical virtue has been transmitted are furnished in the recently-discovered work of Hippolytus. The following account is derived from Mr Bunsen's four volumes, and is expressed for the most part in his own language:—There was under Commodus, while Victor was Bishop of Rome, a good christian soul called Carpophorus, who had a christian slave of the name of Callistus. To help on this slave, his master gave him the administration of a bank, which he kept in that celebrated quarter of Rome called the Piscina Publica. Because of the excellent character of Carpophorus, brethren and widows had entrusted him with their money; but Callistus was a rogue, and abused his master's confidence. When the sums which had been deposited were asked for, they were not to be had, and Callistus being called to account, made his escape. He ran down to the harbour Portus, about twenty miles from Rome, and embarked in a ship that was ready to sail. Carpophorus pursued him, and reached the vessel by a boat, when Callistus, finding that he was to be caught, threw himself into the

These are Bishop Onderdonk's *assumptions* in the words I have quoted; but they also embody a *concession*. If the faithful men were of Timothy's own order, and perpetuated the apostleship, why did Timothy continue to superintend them; and why did *he* still ordain, as if *they* wanted the power?

water, and narrowly escaped drowning. The runaway slave and swindler was brought back to Rome, where his master put him on the domestic tread-mill of the Roman slave-owner, the pistrinum.

In the meantime, the christians at Rome, following a practice not uncommon with them, and willing to commend their christian sympathy in a way which cost them nothing, remonstrated with Carpophorus in behalf of Callistus, urging that a new chance should be given him for well-doing and character. It was represented by Callistus himself, that if he were allowed to go at large, he could collect monies which were due from the Jews. On these pleadings, he was released from the tread-mill; but finding himself in a wretched position with society, he determined to do something remarkable, which would give a new turn to his fortunes for the better or the worse. With this view, he went into a synagogue on the Sabbath-day (our Saturday,) and created a riot by interrupting the worship. The Jews fell upon him, and beat him, and carried him before Fuscianus, the prefect of Rome. By the decision of that judge, he was scourged, and exiled to the unwholesome parts of Sardinia, so fatal to life in summer.

From this situation he was extricated by the kind offices of Marcia. That lady was mistress to the Emperor; and when his temper became afterwards unbearable, she was privy to the conspiracy which put him to death by poison and suffocation. Yet this Marcia had the profession of a christian and church member. The legal concubine of an unbeliever was not excluded, by the canons of the times, from the communion of the church, as long as she kept only to the man she lived with; but there was this awkward circumstance in Marcia's case, that she was also the wife of the captain of the guards. Being very friendly to the christian

In other passages, Bishop Onderdonk gave us to understand that the parties ordained by Timothy were presbyters; and now it appears that these faithful men can hand down their trust successively through all generations!

7. *Ecclesiastical history shows that the incompetency*

cause, and wishing to do it good service, she sent for Bishop Victor, and told him that if he would give her the names of christians transported to Sardinia, she would intercede for them with the Emperor. Victor made out a list, from which he omitted the name of Callistus, as considering him a base criminal, who was suffering the penalty due to his misconduct.

Marcia obtained a letter of pardon for all the parties named by Victor; and Hyacinthus, a eunuch of the palace, and a presbyter of the church, was despatched to the governor of the island to recall the martyrs. Hyacinthus delivered his list, and Callistus, finding that his name was not there, began, by lamentations and entreaties, to move Hyacinthus to obtain his liberation also, which, by Marcia's influence, was accomplished. When the exiles returned, Victor, the Bishop, was ashamed and vexed to find that Callistus was among them; for his master was still alive, and the scandal of his misconduct was still fresh. Therefore, to get him out of the way, Victor sent him to Antium, and allowed him a certain sum a month. When Carpophorus was dead, Zephyrinus, who had succeeded Victor, also deceased, in the Bishopric of Rome, made Callistus his coadjutor in collecting his revenues and keeping his clergy in order. This Zephyrinus was stupid, ignorant, and fond of bribes; and by studying his humour and doing his pleasure, Callistus got everything his own way. At last Zephyrinus died; and so well had Callistus prepared the way for what should follow, that he was elected Bishop—so that a convicted swindler became first, as we should say, Cardinal Vicar, and then Pope!

His episcopacy corresponded in character with his previous career. He espoused and propagated Sabellian doctrine, and yet, to serve a purpose, treated Sabellius harshly. He gave ready

*of elders to ordain was a doctrine gradually introduced into the church, and not held or acted on from the beginning.* I do not constitute the Fathers the interpreters of scripture, and then overrule scripture by their interpretation. We are quite as free as they were to ascertain the sense of scripture for ourselves. Their tenets must be tried at the bar of revelation; and it is our solemn duty, as well as lofty privilege, to search

pardon to excommunicated offenders, and set up a school, in which he taught those flocking to it that discipline was unscriptural—that the tares should be allowed to grow with the wheat; and as there were unclean beasts in the ark, so unclean persons should find room in the church. In a word, this Callistus was, in the opinion of Hippolytus (who on some points may have judged too severely), at once the moral and the doctrinal corrupter of his church and age. Must we consider such a teacher one of the 'faithful men' through whom Paul's instructions to Timothy have been carried into effect? Surely such an opinion may be left to the Romanists, who have canonised Callistus as a saint, and who celebrate his festival on the 14th of October.

One of the most esteemed scripture expositors of our country and age says, in a note with which I am favoured, Bunsen's 'Hippolytus' 'is a very remarkable book. It shows how *very* soon the *ancient* church became a very different body from the apostolic church, and how very different a body the Roman Church is from the ancient church. How far were they from the apostles, though the last of them was not one hundred years dead, when the baptismal water was to be prepared by being prayed over at the hour of the crowing of the cock, and when a man like Callistus *could* be made a bishop! The book clearly proves that there is no *safe* ground beyond the limits of the New Testament. I believe Bunsen is quite right when he says, that the publication of the work, which I think he has satisfactorily proved to be Hippolytus', has fully doubled our accurate information respecting the church of the age immediately succeeding the apostolic.'

the scriptures daily whether these things be so. The earlier christian writers, however, as I have before intimated, may be expected to throw some light on matters of fact; and in so far as they record ancient usages on their own observation, or from information ample and recent, we should attach some consequence to their testimony. Under this aspect alone I now appeal very briefly to their writings.

Clemens Romanus, supposed to be the Clemens mentioned by Paul, speaks, in writing to the Corinthians, only of two orders in the ministry—bishops and deacons, and requires obedience only to these guides.* Polycarp, writing to the Philippians about sixty years after the date of Paul's letters to them, makes mention, in like manner, only of presbyters and deacons. These fathers, in knowing nothing of prelates, have sufficiently discountenanced prelatic ordination. Much stress is laid by Episcopalians on the testimony of Ignatius, who wrote between Clement and Polycarp, and who is the first to speak of three orders. But his writings, by their anachronisms and other marks of spuriousness, give unmistakeable evidence, if not of wholesale forgery, at least of abounding interpolations.† And even his writings

* 'Clement speaks of an ordinance which supposes only two orders in the church: elders, called also overseers, or bishops and deacons.' Bunsen's Hippolytus, vol. ii., p. 231.

† 'Letter to the Trallians, said to be by Ignatius, a fictitious epistle.' Bunsen's Hip., vol. i., see let. p. 59. 'Bunsen has shown that four of the seven epistles mentioned by Eusebius as those of Ignatius are forged, and that the three only found in the Syriac are genuine.'—*Edin. Review* for Jan., 1853, art. I.

have not been sufficiently modernised to suit our existing prelacy. His bishop is only the presiding presbyter of an individual congregation, aided by other presbyters of the same society; or, in other words, he is the moderator of the session. In this sense, we have three orders also—pastors, elders, and deacons. As Ignatius says nothing of diocesan bishops, his testimony is all against their right to be in the church, and, of course, against their exclusive right to ordain. Cyprian, in his fifth epistle, writing to his presbyters and deacons at Carthage, from whom, for the time, he was separated, implores them to 'discharge both his functions and their own, that nothing might be wanting, either in discipline or diligence.'* His functions, as discriminated from theirs, could only be his peculiar functions, consisting as Episcopalians tell us, in ordination and government. Yet, in the opinion of Cyprian, presbyters might replace him in the fulfilment of them. Firmilian, in writing to Cyprian (epist. 43 in some editions and 75 in others), speaks of 'all power and grace being constituted in the congregations presided over by elders (*majores natu*), who have the power of baptising, imposing the hands, and *ordaining*.'† Hilary, the Roman deacon, who wrote in the middle of the fourth century, and whose valuable commentary on the Epistles of Paul is bound

* Peto vos pro fide et religione vestra fungamini illic et vestris partibus et meis ut nihil vel ad disciplinam vel ad diligentian desit.

† Omnis potestas et gratia in ecclesia constituta sit ubi præsident majores natu qui et baptizandi et manum imponendi et ordinandi possident protestatem.

up with the works of Ambrose, tells us in his comments on 1 Tim. iii., that the bishop was merely the oldest presbyter, and that he had the same ordination. The learned Jerome, who wrote about the close of the fourth century, in his epistle to Evagrius, represents Paul as 'perspicuously teaching that presbyters were the same as bishops.' In declaring these office-bearers to be identical, he of course identifies their ordination and ordaining power.

Eusebius, who wrote in the third and fourth centuries, has a passage in his Ecclesiastical History, lib. iii., c. 33, of which Bishop Onderdonk quotes an old translation, and in which, as thus translated, the following sentences occur: 'The greater part of the disciples then living, affected with great zeal towards the Word of God, first fulfilling the heavenly commandment, distributed their substance unto the poor: next, taking their journey, fulfilled the words and office of evangelists, that is, they preached Christ unto them which as yet heard not of the doctrine of faith, and published earnestly the doctrine of the holy gospel. These men having planted the faith in sundry new and strange places, ordained there other pastors, committing unto them the tillage of the new ground, and the oversight of such as were lately converted unto the faith, passing themselves unto other people and countries, being holpen thereunto by the grace of God which wrought with them; for as yet by the power of the Holy Ghost they wrought miraculously, so that an innumerable multitude of men embraced the religion of the Almighty God at the first

hearing, with prompt and willing minds.'* 'These men ordained.' What men ordained? The antecedent is 'the greater part of the disciples then living.' It would be difficult to assign any sense to these words that would make the greater part of the disciples then living diocesan bishops. The evasions of Bishop Onderdonk are not satisfactory. To say that Eusebius describes what took place long before his time, and what he therefore knew imperfectly, is in effect to allege that his history is never to be trusted, unless when he narrates the events of his own day. Even were it so, the language of Eusebius shows what he considers to have been allowable, and likely to have happened. To say that Eusebius speaks only of the rich among the disciples, and that even as thus understood, the expression is magniloquent and oratorical, and not fit to be the basis of any argument concerning the number of the early evangelists, is not to explain but to annul history. But 'ecclesiastical historians,' we are told, 'sometimes speak of a person's ordaining, who did not perform the rite himself, but had it done by another; as the historian Socrates says of the emperor Constantine, "when he had builded churches among them, he hastened to consecrate them a bishop, and to ordain the holy company of clergymen." If it be thus said that Constantine consecrated and ordained, though he only employed bishops to do so, it is competent for us to infer that the same must be meant, if Eusebius is understood to say, that evan-

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture. Post., p. 41.

gelists, not of the highest ministerial rank, ordained; they only caused persons to be ordained by the ministers of that rank.'* Here the 'sometimes' is supported by a *solitary instance;* and what is it? The emperor, who acted as head of the church, ordained by his ecclesiastical creatures! Principal Campbell says of the rulers of the church of those times, that 'the very erection of the dignities, and the investiture of the dignitaries, were generally effected by the imperial edict.'† We need not wonder, under such circumstances, that ordination should be ascribed to the emperor. This was the case of a superior acting through inferiors. Where is an example of an act being ascribed to inferiors which they performed through superiors? Where, again, have evangelists the praise where prelates did the work? But Eusebius, we are reminded, speaks of ordination by apostles and bishops. Yes; but we have also seen that he speaks of ordination by evangelists. Between these modes of speaking there is no contradiction. Ordination may have been conducted by all the parties named—apostles, bishops, evangelists. He is also full, we are admonished, of the successions of various lines of bishops down from the apostles. Neither is that circumstance at all decisive of the question in dispute. It is still considered by ministers an honourable distinction to succeed an eminent minister: but though that succession may be valued and recorded, it is not therefore deemed essential to the ministry. It is plain, also, that if presbyters,

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture. Post., p. 42.

† On Church History, vol. i., p. 394.

*who never attained to higher than presbyterate functions,* were in some instances ordained to them by apostles, and might be able to trace their ordination to some member of the apostolic college, evangelists might, in the same sense, claim succession without leaving their proper status, or pretending to prelatic dignity. The testimony of Eusebius to *ordination by a throng of evangelists, who could not have been all diocesan bishops,* is not impaired by such objections.

I trust that the right of elders to ordain, as well as to rule, has been satisfactorily established. If we suppose the proof to have been inadequate, what follows? Certainly not the vindication of prelacy. Paul ordained, Timothy ordained; but we cannot bring back apostles and evangelists; and having proved their offices to have been extraordinary and temporary, we call in vain for their successors. Are we, then, to create a new class of functionaries, and constitute them the sole ordainers, in order to keep clear of presbyters? Surely it were better to explain the power of presbyters liberally, than to enact the twofold invention of calling into being a class of diocesans unknown to the inspired penmen, and then of assigning to these man-made superiors a higher grade of duties than we think fit to confide to presbyter-bishops, a confessedly scriptural order of ecclesiastical officers.

If the foregoing discussion has any conclusiveness, the doctrine of a christian ministry in three orders is not to be found in scripture. Let it be remembered that many who are opponents on the general question are here of our opinion, and that,

in times the most searching and enlightened, the divine right of Episcopacy has been given up by Episcopalians with general consent. The celebrated Dodwell maintained that the apostles instituted only the order of presbyters, and left the order of prelatists to arise out of facts. Even Hammond, who reversed the supposition, and regarded the apostles as appointing only diocesan bishops along with deacons, found in scripture only two orders, and left a ministry of three orders to the origination and defence of expediency. In the 'Erudition of a Christian Man,' a treatise drawn up by a committee of bishops and divines, approved of by both houses of Parliament, and published with a Preface in the name of King Henry VIII., it is said, 'Of these *two orders only*, that is to say, *priests and deacons*, scripture maketh express mention, and how they were conferred of the apostles by prayer and imposition of hands; but the primitive church afterwards appointed inferior degrees, as sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, etc., but least peradventure it might be thought by some, that such authorities, powers, and jurisdictions, as patriarchs, primates, archbishops and metropolitans now have, or heretofore at any time have had, justly and lawfully over other bishops, were given them by God in holy scripture; we think it expedient and necessary, that all men should be advertised and taught, that all such lawful power and authority of any one bishop over another, were and be given them by the consent, ordinances, and positive laws of men only, and not by any ordinance of God in holy scripture;

and all such power and authority which any bishop has used over another, which has not been given him by such consent and ordinance of men, is in very deed no lawful power, but plain usurpation and tyranny.' *

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## CHAPTER VI.

### SECT. IV.—*Concluding Remarks.*

THERE are many able and excellent ministers in the Church of England. One cannot enter their society without being charmed by their mental cultivation, their refined manners, their deep-toned piety, and official devotedness. Many of the private members of the English Church command like respect and admiration by their decided godliness. It is to these excellent of the earth we specially make our appeal in beseeching the friends of Episcopacy to reconsider its grounds. Is a system of such complication and pomp and lordly control really sanctioned by the New Testament, or compatible with the simplicity that is in Christ? At the present time there is special need to consider whether it has any affinity to Romanism. The Rev. J. M. Rodwell, Bishop Onderdonk's editor in this country, speaks of the Church of England as 'the authorised protester against Rome.' † But how does this appear when Puseyism

* Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 25.

† Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, p. viii.

is active and powerful in that church, and in no other? Is the fellowship of Episcopacy and Puseyism a thing of chance? Surely the facts should be pondered before this exposition of them is adopted. Let any one examine carefully the episcopal controversy, and he will perceive that a great portion of the proof adduced in behalf of the Anglican hierarchy will favour Rome also, and Rome more. 'There is always the feature,' says Bishop Onderdonk, 'in civil governments of magnitude, that many officers, and several grades of them, have a common head above all.'* But whether does a host of bishops or a single pope answer best to the description of a common head above all? 'Another presumptive argument for Episcopacy,' says the same writer, 'is, that in the ministries of all false religions, if extensively professed, there are different grades, with a common superior.' Here the query again presents itself, Whether does a multitude of prelates or one spiritual superior present most analogy to the old Pontifex Maximus of the city on seven hills? Many have been the reasonings in favour of Episcopacy drawn from the Mosaic priesthood; and in all these disquisitions the high priest answers to the bishops. But one high priest has surely more resemblance to one pope than to a prelatical army. Often has the Aaronic ministry been asserted by Episcopalians, in defending their system, to have been typical of the christian ministry. But what plea could more avail

* Episcopacy Tested by Scripture, Introduction, p. xi.

Romanists in justifying the sacrifice of the mass and human mediation?

In her twenty-ninth article the Church of England claims power to decree rites and ceremonies and authority in controversies of faith. Such power and authority could alone warrant her multiplication of functionaries and observances foreign to the apostolic age. But if so much may be warrantably introduced, where is the demarcation in principle between these inventions of the Church of England and those of the Church of Rome? The utmost stress has been laid by many advocates of Episcopacy on the writings of the christian fathers. But these fathers belong to ages in which the antichristian apostacy was developing itself. Not a few of them were of that very order of bishops who were gradually annulling the rights of private members and subordinate office-bearers of the church, and more and more assuming all jurisdiction and dignity into their own hands. The earlier fathers being in effect witnesses against later abuses, were in many instances interpolated to bring their sanction of priestly devices down to the times; and if we are to regard the mangled remains of Ignatius as a standard of theological doctrine, the embryo of almost every papal error will be sheltered by his authority. All the world knows what importance is widely attached in the Church of England to the doctrine of apostolic succession. Some of the clergy hold it more strongly, others less strongly; by few of them is it wholly and unequivocally repudiated. But that doctrine in all its modifications involves an acknowledgment of the

Romish Church as a true church; and every one who admits it into his creed is concerned to show that the papal church is not an apostacy, and that a popish priest is a rightful instructor, while such men as Luther, Calvin, and Wesley ordained to the ministry, have run without being sent.

Let an Episcopalian, then, fall back on the first principles of his polity; let him delight himself with analogies which multiply grades, and which give them a common head; let him draw parallels between Mosaic hierarchies and Christian hierarchies, and proceed to do substantially what the family of Aaron only foreshadowed; let him largely estimate the power of the church, and hold sacred many appointments sanctioned only by its ordination; let him slide continually from scriptural argument into ecclesiastical tradition, and quote freely from authors who can just as well be quoted for purgatory and prayers for the dead and clerical celibacy; let him imagine what is no matter of revelation, and admits not of historical proof, that the clergy of his church have their holy orders by lineal and unbroken succession from the apostles, through the Romish Church, and hence derive a special authority and consequence as ministers of the Word; let him familiarise himself with this series of proofs, and grow more confident of their validity, and drink deeper into their spirit; and will he not be predisposed to think of Rome—owned as a church, and the mother church—with filial regard, and with indulgent if not respectful sentiments?

Far am I from saying or thinking that all zealous

friends of the Church of England are tinctured with Puseyism. Many of its devoted members are in the deepest affliction at the rise and growth of that plague in their communion. But the question remains, whether the defences put up for Episcopacy do not naturally and legitimately conduct their ardent student and admirer in the direction of the Tractarians, and whether the evangelical section of the English Church, in the very act of decrying Puseyism with honest indignation, may not be undesignedly lending it countenance and strength, by adhering to a system in which the heresy has its source as well as its seat. If I may not affirm that such is the fact, I may invite the candid and devout to consider whether these things be so; and let every one of us be careful on his own part to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.

# PART VI.

## ON THE COMMON GOVERNMENT OF CHURCHES BY REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS.

If churches are not to be associated under the charge of a diocesan, the question arises whether they are to have any other kind of common government. It is the conviction of Presbyterians that they may and should have a joint superintendence by representative councils. On behalf of this constituent in our ecclesiastical polity, I offer the following pleas.

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### CHAPTER I.

*We have, in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, an account of a Council held at Jerusalem.*

Our Independent brethren usually resolve the decree of the apostles and elders into one of simple and absolute inspiration. The questions then arise, Why should an appeal have been made from one apostle to other apostles; or, in other words, from inspiration to inspiration? and why should an appeal have been made from an apostle to elders; in other words, from an inspired man to men who were uninspired? Dr Wardlaw thinks that he answers these questions and clears up the whole case by telling us that there were

in the appeal two points to be ascertained: a point of doctrine, and a point of fact. 'The point of doctrine was one of the very first magnitude, involving the freedom of the Gentiles from the yoke of the Mosaic law, and the justification of both Jews and Gentiles by faith, without the deeds of the law; the latter being the very first principle of the gospel. The point of fact was, whether those men who had come down from Jerusalem, pretending that they had a commission hence to preach the doctrine of the necessity of subjection to the law for justification, really had such a commission.'* According to this principle of interpretation, an appeal was made to the apostles as to the doctrine, and to them and the elders as to the fact. This solution of the difficulties is certainly ingenious; but the longer I consider it, I am the less convinced of its truth. The question of fact is all-important in Dr Wardlaw's exegesis; and if it had been equally important in the narrative, it should have got some prominence there also. We are not so much as told, however, in the opening statement of the case, that the Judaising teachers pretended to have a commission from Jerusalem. Even Jerusalem is not named. 'Certain men, who came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.' Here the only authority spoken of as appealed to is not that of any party in Jerusalem, but that of the Jewish lawgiver, Moses. 'When, therefore, Paul

* Congreg. Indep., p. 302.

and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question.' What question? The question whether these advocates of circumcision had a commission from Jerusalem? No such question has been yet mentioned or hinted at. The only question previously announced was the question of doctrine, whether the uncircumcised could be saved.

On coming to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas 'were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.'* Here is no mention of the 'question of fact' whether the apostles and elders had commissioned the Judaising teachers; nor could this commission have been claimed where the apostles and elders were present to deny it. The sole question there discussed—and which seemed to spring up anew there—must have been that of doctrine. But the controversy there raised gave immediate occasion to the subsequent council. For we are told in the succeeding verse, 'And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.'

In all that is recorded to have been said at the council, there is still no mention of *the fact;* the

* Acts xv. 4, 5.

speeches are addressed to the doctrine, and the doctrine only. The phraseology of the decree gives some plausibility to Dr Wardlaw's interpretation: 'Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment.' * The countenance here given to the interpretation in question is more apparent than real. When the parties issuing the decree had spoken of Judaising teachers as going out *from them*, it was most natural to guard the churches against the idea that such teachers had gone *from them with any warrant for what they taught.* But even here it is not alleged that the false teachers had pleaded metropolitan authority. This truth—if it be a truth—is left to be inferred; and is it likely that *what was a chief question in the debate* would not be mentioned *in the related occasion of the debate*, or in *the report* of the debate, but left to be learned as a matter of *inference* from its conclusion?

Dr Wardlaw strongly protests against the idea that the apostles would ever compromise their character as inspired men by entering into common debate. But they were confessedly appealed to, along with men not inspired, and they allowed the decrees to go forth as those of 'the apostles and elders.' Dr Wardlaw, however, reminds us that Paul sometimes associated other names with his own at the commencement of his epistles. But are these cases parallel? They

* Acts xv. 24.

seem to me wide as the poles asunder. By the usages of antiquity, the occurrence in epistles of friendly names in alliance with those of the writers, expressed nothing more than kind salutations. But what usage, ancient or modern, places on a footing of mere friendliness or courtesy the mention of parties as appealed to in a grave question, and as issuing the decree by which the question was settled?

'You will not,' says Dr Wardlaw, 'question Paul's inspiration. Is it, then, to be imagined that the inspired instructions of one who had the mind of Christ, and who was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles, were remitted for review, and for judicial decision upon their authority to an uninspired assembly? To the churches of Galatia this apostle asserts and jealously vindicates from every suspicion and surmise his own direct and independent inspiration,'* etc. Yet Dr Wardlaw tells us that 'Paul and Barnabas were simply and exclusively appellants, or, in the terminology of modern presbyterian church courts, commissioners.'† 'They were only the bearers of the reference. They had no more to do with the final settlement of the question than the parties in any suit have a seat on the bench, or a place among the jury. . . . Paul and Barnabas were admitted to state facts in evidence, but no more.'‡ Paul, then, by this showing, did allow his doctrine to be made matter of trial, and even sunk the apostle in the commissioner, and waved all higher pretensions, in order to state facts in

* Congreg. Indep., p. 268. † Ibid, p. 289. ‡ Ibid, p. 290.

evidence. I cannot think, however, that Paul, in this procedure, was a commissioner simply. He was in the council, he spoke after Peter, and before James, as expressing his mind in the course of the debate; and in declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by him, he must have treated the subject generally. Was he not of the apostles, then, from whom the decrees went forth? The supposition of the contrary appears to me most gratuitous and improbable. But these same decrees were 'ordained of elders,' as well as of apostles,* and we may not so explain this circumstance as to explain it away.

Let any candid reader peruse the whole narrative, and say whether he do not find the uninspired element so largely introduced and frequently recurring as to render it extremely difficult to resolve the mixed discussion and decision into a simple announcement of inspiration. But Dr Wardlaw with great power presses this difficulty—that if the decree was not inspired it is not binding; it was infallible only if it was divine. In reply, let it be observed that the question was one regarding which the Holy Ghost had already furnished grounds of judgment, and that the apostles rested their case expressly on prior oracles and miraculous attestations. When the apostles and elders knew and stated the truth from prior evidences, might not the Spirit of God regulate and sanction the final expression of the truth so as to justify the lan-

* Acts xvi. 4.

guage, 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us?' Dr Davidson supposes that even institutions suggested at first by natural propriety and common sense might become divine by obtaining the divine sanction. 'The constitution of the first churches,' he says, 'was adopted because it seemed the best fitted in the eye of common sense to promote the great end of such societies, and the Deity sanctioned the means so suggested.'* And if this is conceivable in regard to what mere prudence suggested, is it not conceivable in regard to what had been already suggested, and in effect ratified, by the Spirit of God? If this principle be admitted, then all is comparatively plain; we see why the divine and human elements are so blended. But otherwise, after all Dr Wardlaw's masterly treatment of this topic, I am disposed to say with Dr Mason: 'Without such a distinction as we have now stated, their history (that of the apostles in the case under consideration) is a tissue of inconsistencies, and their conduct in the Synod of Jerusalem must be given up as a riddle which baffles solution.' †

Dr Davidson tells us that the apostles 'proposed' certain conclusions to the council. But how should inspiration propose? and how should proposals be made to parties on whose adoption of proposals nothing depended, and who had no power of deliberation in the matter?

The sum of the whole is, that the Spirit of God allowed apostles and elders to defend truth already

* Eccles. Pol., p. 43. † On Episcopacy, p. 294.

revealed and attested, by arguments drawn from scripture and providence; and for the benefit of the churches, eventually sealed by his sanction the just conclusions to which they came.

The question then presents itself, what bearing has the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, as now explained, on the question of church courts? I freely admit that I do not find here all the elements of a court of review. There must be a good deal supplied before a modern church judicatory can be here completed. But, on the other hand, the subject of dispute might have been decided by simple oracles and miracles. And I cannot perceive why co-operative and deliberative elements were so largely introduced, and made to bear authoritatively on many churches, if not to indicate the joint and mutually helpful manner in which differences of aftertimes should be settled, when inspiration should be withdrawn—with only such alterations as would necessarily result from altered circumstances.

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## CHAPTER II.

*In the apostolic age there was a plurality of churches in each of a number of cities, and the several churches of each city had a common government.*

THIS is a part of the argument to which I attach a principal importance; and I invite my readers to weigh well the proof that shall be offered them. 'I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say.' It

can be shown, I think, that in such large cities as Jerusalem and Ephesus, the christians and their teachers were so numerous that we cannot reasonably suppose them to have met only in one place for worship—that in such cities the christians certainly met for worship in different places, and the christians attending different places of meeting in the same city formed distinct churches—and yet that these sectional churches belonged to aggregate churches, and had a common government.

SECT. I.—*In such large cities as Jerusalem and Ephesus the christians and their teachers were so numerous that we cannot reasonably suppose them to have met only in one place for worship.*

DR DAVIDSON maintains that the word *church* occurs in two senses in the New Testament. 'In the first place,' he says, 'it is used to denote the whole body of believers, the true people of Christ on earth and [in] heaven.' It does not concern us at present to discuss the accuracy of this definition of the catholic church. 'Secondly, the term church,' says Dr Davidson, 'signifies a number of believers habitually assembling for the worship of God in one place.'* 'The disciples were accustomed to meet for worship and other ordinances (in Jerusalem), not in sections scattered here and there throughout the city, called congregations, but together in the same place.'†

If there were several churches in Jerusalem, or in Ephesus, or any great city, having such a common

* Eccles. Pol., p. 59. † Ibid, p. 95.

relation and superintendence that they were called in the aggregate one church, there would be here nothing like Independency, but an approximation, at least, to the numerous congregations and collective government for which Presbyterians contend. Dr Davidson, however, maintains that in each city there was only one church, and that its members met habitually for worship and for ecclesiastical business in one place. He combats the natural objection to these principles derived from the number of believers and teachers in many great cities. How could the converts in those populous towns where the gospel was most successful be accommodated in a single building? and if this had been practicable, how could the numerous teachers in these cities have found room for the exercise of their functions?

The mode in which Dr Davidson meets these difficulties does not seem to me to be at all satisfactory. He takes every numerical term in its most restricted acceptation; and feeling that the difficulty still remains, quotes Carson's words: 'Is there a single passage in all the history in which they are said or supposed, either expressly or by implication, to have been divided into distinct congregations? If there were really a difficulty as to their number, a difficulty can never destroy a fact, far less be the foundation of an opposite system.'* A difficulty can never destroy a fact; certainly not, but a difficulty may be such as to cast doubt on a *supposed* fact, and

* Eccles. Pol., p. 74.

create reasonable suspicion that the so-called fact is only a fallacy.

Let the reader peruse dispassionately the notices which the New Testament gives us of the numerical strength of the church at Jerusalem:—

1. The same day (Pentecost) were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

2. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.†

3. Many of them which heard the word believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand.‡

4. Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.§

5. And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.‖

6. Thou seest, brother, how many thousands (myriads) of Jews there are who believe.¶

Dr Wardlaw's statements in regard to these numbers are ingenuous. He says, 'The terms in which the progressive increase of the church is recorded are very strong.' While Dr Davidson holds that the five thousand men included women, Dr Wardlaw says that they are evidently exclusive of the other sex, of whom the number is not stated; and while Dr Davidson insists that the five thousand included prior converts, Dr Wardlaw concedes that they 'were converted on one occasion.' 'The question is,' he subjoins, 'how could such multitudes form only a single congregation? The question is a natural and a fair

* Acts ii. 41. † Acts ii. 47. ‡ Acts iv. 4.
§ Acts v. 14. ‖ Acts vi. 7. ¶ Acts xxi. 20.

one. In meeting it I would not be such a recreant to all candour as to deny all difficulty.'*

Suppose we consent to all the cutting and curtailing by which Dr Davidson and others reduce the apparent increase of believers, and adopt such a restricted interpretation as, in the judgment of Dr Wardlaw, is 'unnatural,' still does not the inspired narrative leave the impression that the many thousands and superadded multitudes of which it speaks could not by any possibility assemble for ordinary, stated, habitual worship in one place of meeting; and that adequate employment for the teaching gifts of apostles and other instructors having their central position in Jerusalem, is by such a theory of exposition rendered utterly unimaginable?

We can conceive that the temple might be a place of general resort, frequented by companies of christians at different hours, according to their convenience—an edifice ever open, to which believers were coming and going, and where they appointed meetings with each other; and which, under such aspects, might be considered their common *rendezvous*. We can conceive, farther, that they might have occasionally there such meetings as we would call *public*, meaning simply that the business concerned all, and none were excluded. So we have petitions which go forth from the citizens of Glasgow in public meeting assembled. And perhaps some antiquarian will find, eighteen hundred years hence, one of our newspapers

* Congreg. Indep., p. 50.

containing such language, and clearly prove from it that the citizens of Glasgow could, in the nineteenth century, be all accommodated in the City Hall. Other circumstances may be appealed to as demonstrating that the citizens of Glasgow then amounted to very many thousands. But our expositor won't be moved by difficulties which cannot demolish facts, and he proves decisively from his text that in the year of our Lord 1853, the citizens of Glasgow could be assembled in one public meeting.

In the critical circumstances of the primitive church, when the enmity which slew Jesus watched malignantly his followers, we have some difficulty in perceiving how the christians would be permitted, even in rare and extraordinary cases, to throng the courts of the temple by a full muster of all their 'myriads.' But that the temple of the Jews should have been statedly appropriated to christian worship, and that from week to week, and month to month, and year to year, the christians should have assembled in its courts, deterred neither by inclement weather nor by more direful persecution, is a supposition presenting not merely a formidable difficulty, but all the features of moral and physical impossibility. Beyond this impossibility remains the other of finding by such an hypothesis effective occupation for numerous teachers.

The dwellers of Jerusalem, it must also be remembered, were of different countries, and spoke different languages; and if this fact gave origin to many distinct synagogues, did it not induce the christians to form themselves into distinct congregations, that all

might be instructed in the tongues which they best understood?

But Dr Wardlaw adheres to the letter of the narrative, and asks: 'How stands the argument? We have the fact on inspired record, that the multitudes of the disciples met together; we have in opposition to this the affirmation of our Presbyterian brethren, that their so meeting was impossible. Our brethren say they could not, the inspired historian says they did. Here, then, is a balance of difficulties.'* If there be any dilemma here, Dr Wardlaw kindly extricates us from its horns by another section of his reasoning. He will have general language about meetings of the saints in Jerusalem to be absolutely taken. But when he comes to speak of the dispersion of these saints, the like general language admits and demands a restricted sense. He then insists on the 'unreasonableness of a strictly literal interpretation of the word *all*.' 'Every one knows,' he says, 'in how very general and indefinite a sense *all* is frequently used. To take a single example. In Matt. iii. 56, it is said respecting the ministry of John the Baptist, "There went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." No man in his senses will ever suppose that there was not an inhabitant left remaining in city or country. Every one understands the meaning simply to be, that the people went out *in very great numbers*. . . . This is the

* Congreg. Indep., p. 54.

more evident from the comparative statement given as to Jesus. . . . That Jesus made and baptised more disciples than John. Why, then, is the *all* to be taken in its strict literality in the instance under consideration?'* According to this reasoning, there went out to John not only Jerusalem, but all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and yet in such a sense that many were not included in the *all;* and at the very same time when John was baptising in Jordan there may have been, and to a moral certainty there were, religious services in the temple, and in numerous synagogues. So if it be admitted that all the christians met in one place, and that place the temple, why may they not have assembled in a sense that left many out of the *all*, and permitted of many meetings for worship in different parts of the city and its environs? The two cases seem to be identical in principle, and if so, where is the balance of difficulties? or where is there any difficulty at all?

The principle of strict literality cannot be carried out in any explanation of the passage. 'They continued daily with one accord in the temple.' Literally interpreted, these words teach us that the christians, besides being all in the temple, were always there. They *continued* in it. You say the continuance must be understood with limitations; if so, why not also the 'one accord'—the numerical attendance? But Drs Wardlaw and Davidson remind us in italics that all that believed '*were together*.'† Dr Lightfoot says of

* Congreg. Indep., p. 80. † Acts ii. 44.

the expression *together* (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ) that it is of frequent and various use in the Septuagint: 'It sometimes betokeneth the meeting of persons in the same company, as Josh. xi. 5, Judg. vi. 33, and xix. 6, etc., so of beasts, Deut. xxii. 10. Sometimes their concurring in the same action, though not in the same company or place, as Psal. ii. 2, and xxxiv. 3, and xlix. 2, and lxxiv. 6, and lxxxiii. 3, etc. Sometimes their concurring in the same condition, as Psal. xlvi. 10, and lxii. 9, Esa. lxvi. 17, Jer. vi. 12. And sometimes their knitting together, though in several companies, as Joab's and Abner's men, though they sat at a distance, and the pool of Gibeon between them, yet are they said συνάντᾶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ, 2 Sam. ii. 13. And in this sense is the word to be understood in this story. For it is past all imagination or conceiving, that all those thousands of believers that were now in Jerusalem should keep all of one company and knot, and not part asunder; for what house would hold them? But they kept in several companies or congregations, according as their languages, nations, or other references did knit them together. And this joining together, because it was apart from those who believed not, and because it was in the same profession and practice of the duties of religion; therefore it is said to be ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ, though it were in several companies or congregations.'*

When Drs Wardlaw and Davidson lay so much stress on the statement that all who believed were

* On Acts ii. 44.

together, they do not sufficiently consider what follows—'and had all things common.' Surely the community of goods, to whatever extent carried, was not exemplified in the temple. Surely they did not distribute loaves and dresses in Solomon's porch. And if it would be ridiculous to apply *one part of the sentence* to the temple, what propriety is there in so applying the other clause of the same sentence? The *being together*, and *having all things common*, are parts of one whole, and must be explained consistently. Dr Davidson admits the passage in question to be parallel with another which informs us after what fashion the christians were together, and points to a better than any stone-and-lime identification: 'The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul, neither said any of them that aught of the things which they possessed was his own, but they had all things common.' They were together in 'heart and soul,' in mutual confidence and commingling sympathies.

These remarks have had respect to Jerusalem. In other great cities Dr Davidson cannot find a temple in which the christians might worship collectively. Principal Campbell, a favourite authority with Congregationalists, says, 'There were yet no magnificent edifices built for the reception of christian assemblies, such as were afterwards reared at a great expense, and called churches. Their best accommodation for more than a century was the private houses of the wealthiest disciples, which were but ill adapted to receive very numerous conven-

tions.'* And yet against all seeming possibility, they must be held to have worshipped habitually and regularly in one apartment!

## CHAPTER II.

SECT. II.—*In such large cities the christians certainly met for worship in different places, and the christians attending different places of meeting in the same city formed distinct churches.*

IT has appeared that in different large cities no one building could have sufficed for the numerous christians and their teachers. But if christians met for worship otherwise than in one place, and had in truth distinct worshipping societies in the same city, should not these facts have been indicated? The anticipation I acknowledge to be reasonable, and I think that it is verified. 'They continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.' In commenting on these words, Dr Davidson observes, 'When it is said that they brake bread from house to house, it is intimated, that besides meeting in the temple, they met in private houses in little companies, similar to family circles, where they partook together of the daily meal, and celebrated the supper of the Lord.' We have here the acknowledgment that the christians conducted religious exercises not in the temple only but in other abodes. If certain persons

* Lect. vii. on Eccles. Hist., p. 215.

met regularly in a house of which the situation was more convenient for them than any other, and if they selected the most suitable time as well as place for their solemn services, and took care, as regarded speakers and hearers, that all things were done decently and in order, would it have been improper to call parties thus associated a *church?* There is an apparent answer to this query in the undeniable fact, that we actually read OF CHURCHES IN HOUSES. Of these churches, Dr Davidson says, 'Had godly households been all that was intended by the phrase before us, they would not probably have been saluted as *churches in houses.* These considerations, with others that might be mentioned, incline us to believe that the phrase denotes a company of believers meeting, in a church capacity, in the houses of Aquila, Nymphas, and Philemon. . . . The person at whose habitation a part of them assembled may have been an eminent teacher of righteousness; or his dwelling may have presented peculiar advantages in the midst of persecution; or his premises may have contained an apartment large enough to accommodate a considerable number. Thus Neander thinks that the nature of Aquila's employment required extensive premises, and that, therefore, he could set apart a room for the use of disciples wherever he fixed his abode. When we also take into account his religious qualifications, it is natural to suppose that he frequently led the devotions of these small assemblies. . . . Philemon, who is also said to have had a church in his house, was a wealthy member of the

church at Colosse, distinguished for his hospitality towards christian brethren, especially evangelists. Some think that he was a deacon, others a bishop; but it is now impossible to discover what office he filled, or in what rank he moved. He is styled by Paul a *fellow-worker;* so that we are inclined to draw the conclusion that he was a christian teacher, one qualified and accustomed to impart instruction. . . . It may be inferred that the circumstances connected with Nymphas and his house were similar, although the New Testament furnishes no information respecting him except the incidental mention of a church in his house near Laodicea. In short, every view that can be taken of the matter shows that the expression "church in the house," denotes not merely the pious members of a single house, but a number of believers meeting in a private dwelling, or in the premises connected with it, for conducting religious exercises in the name of the holy Redeemer.'* In these passages it is distinctly admitted that the believers who assembled in the houses mentioned met in a church capacity. Dr Davidson also thinks that the nature of churches in houses may have some light thrown on it by the words of Justin: '"I am staying at the house of one Martinus, and I know of no other place of meeting besides this; and if any one wished to come to me, I communicated to him the words of truth." The persons who thus repaired to Justin's house for instruction constituted, according to Neander, "the church in Justin's house."'† If

* Eccles. Pol., pp. 99, 100. † Ibid, p. 101.

we apply these remarks to the case of Jerusalem, surely the meetings for worship in the dwellings of that city could not have been more simple than those to which, in the estimation of Dr Davidson, the word church was actually applied. And if so, then we have many churches in one church, many sectional churches in one aggregate church of Jerusalem, and distinctive societies managing matters more immediately concerning themselves in their own way, while matters of more general concern were regulated by a common ecclesiastical administration.

But is the term 'church' ever applied to the believers in a city, and cotemporaneously to a section of these believers? The question is of minor consequence. When it is allowed that there were churches in houses, and larger worshipping societies in the same cities, all that remains to be settled is a matter of nomenclature. Still, we read of churches in Laodicea, and churches in Corinth. There was a church of Laodicea comprising the believers of the city, and there was a church in the house of Nymphas at Laodicea, in which only a few believers could assemble. 'Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea and Nymphas, and *the church which is in his house*, and when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read *also in the church of the Laodiceans.*' Is there not here a church of the Laodiceans, and a church at Laodicea in the house of Nymphas?—a larger church comprising a smaller, though both were local? Dr Davidson, in defending his principles, admits that the example of Nymphas at Laodicea is apparently an

exception to them, but not really so, he adds, unless it can be proved that he lived in the city rather than its vicinity. Surely it does not lie with us to show that the passage teaches what he confesses it teaches 'apparently:' the burden of proof must lie with Dr Davidson, when he holds that it teaches what it has no appearance of teaching. As Dr Davidson elsewhere observes, 'it is natural to understand all passages in their obvious meaning, . . . unless the contrary be suggested by the context.'*

Still farther, it is said to the christians at Corinth, 'Let your women keep silence in the churches.'† Does not this language indicate that there was a church at Corinth sub-divided into churches? Dr Davidson owns that 'in this argument there is some plausibility.'‡ Yet 'the term,' he says, 'is sufficiently interpreted by the previous context. The apostle gives a rule which he intends should be followed "in all the churches of the saints." He uses the plural number, because he has in view all the churches as well as that of Corinth.' But if his intention had been general, would he not have used throughout a general phraseology? Would he not have said, 'Let *women* keep silence in the churches?' Why *your* women, if he did not mean *their* women in particular? Let Dr Davidson produce another example of such special diction without special signification.

Dr Wardlaw argues that the churches spoken of may mean churches out of Corinth, because 'the two

* Eccles. Pol., p. 77; see also p. 230.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 34. ‡ Eccles. Pol., pp. 114, 115.

epistles to the Corinthians, though addressed no doubt primarily to the church in Corinth, happen both of them to have much more general inscriptions, that of the second being to "the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia," and that of the first to "the church of God which is at Corinth, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."' To this criticism I reply, first, that if the language used in these epistles may be understood as addressed to a *plurality of churches* distributed over *extensive regions*, there may be more of ecclesiastical confederacy in this portion of scripture than we had hoped to discover. I answer, secondly, that the apostle in the context speaks of the use and abuse of gifts evidently belonging to the Corinthian christians distinctively. And I answer, thirdly, that Dr Wardlaw has expressly shut out his own criticism. He says, 'The church is addressed. The pronoun "YE" throughout the whole chapter has an unvarying reference.' * This observation in regard to the fifth chapter is equally suitable in regard to the fourteenth. Speaking of the gifts in Corinth, the apostle says, verse 31, 'Ye may all prophesy one by one.' The subject of prophesying is carried through three succeeding verses, and the very next exhortation is, 'Let your women keep silence in the churches.' The *ye* fixes the *your*, and shows that christians in Corinth are alone intended.

To return, however, to the acknowledged fact, that

* Congreg. Indep., p. 236.

*there were churches* in houses *not including all the believers in a city:* Surely where there was a church in a house there was a church besides. Surely where a few composed a church, the many christians in the same town were not unchurched. Dr Davidson observes, that 'Aquila had a church in his house, while there was a very large assembly in another part of the city.'* But if the smaller congregation was a church, is it to be supposed that the larger congregation was not a church? Fifty or a hundred were a church; but many hundreds or several thousands met loosely without order or relation. Such a conclusion is utterly inadmissible. In the apostolic age, then, there were more than one church in one city. We cannot tell how many there were, but a plurality of churches in single cities is clearly established. Indeed, Dr Davidson expressly says of two companies worshipping separately at Ephesus, that they were TWO SECTIONS, or rather, he adds, TWO CHURCHES.† Still he thinks, that 'when Aquila resided at Ephesus, and had a church in his house after Paul's second visit, the organisation of christians in the city was not complete or final'‡—that 'it is hardly candid to argue from the perfect to the imperfect organisation of a certain church,'§ and that 'it is quite improbable that these sections which existed for a time in Ephesus had their own bishops (or elders) permanently appointed over them.'‖ But elsewhere he says, 'we hold that there was a plurality of elders (or bishops)

* Eccles. Pol., p. 110. † Ibid, p. 105.
‡ Page 104. § Page 104. ‖ Page 110.

in each separate assembly of christians, correctly designated a church.' If, then, the church in Aquila's house wanted elders, the New Testament has called it a church incorrectly; and if the word church is used both correctly and incorrectly in the New Testament, how can Dr Davidson speak of the sense of the word as clearly determined, and how can he found on its consistent and well-ascertained acceptation the Congregational system?

There was a church in Aquila's house, and there was another large christian assembly in Ephesus, which formed a church too; for the members of it met statedly; and 'the term church,' says Dr Davidson, 'signifies a number of believers habitually assembling for the worship of God in one place.' Here, then, were two churches, at least, at Ephesus; and *such Dr Davidson expressly admits them to have been.* He reminds us, however, that the plural term, churches, is not actually applied to the Ephesian believers in the scriptural record; and why is it not so applied? 'Because it was not the divine will,' he says, 'that the christians should continue apart, being two or more εκκλησιαι (churches) permanently.'* It seems, then, that there were *two or more churches*, temporarily—let the admission be noted—but they were not so called, lest the fact should have been accounted a precedent! The thing happened, but God was careful it should not be called what it was, lest the right naming of it should occasion its continuance or repetition! I

* Eccles. Pol., p. 118.

leave the reader to estimate the value of this argument; and for the present I stand on the *admitted fact, that there were two or more churches at Ephesus.*

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## CHAPTER II.

### SECT. III.—*Sectional churches belonged to aggregate churches, and had a common government.*

WE have seen that in certain large cities the christians had different places of meeting, and formed distinct churches. I wish to know, then, whether these churches had or had not a joint ecclesiastical administration? Dr Davidson is decided in his conviction that *they were under one government.** He allows that the separate companies worshipped as they could, which implies that their convenience might not in all things be identical, and that they needed to make a number of arrangements distinctively. Still, 'it is quite improbable,' he thinks, 'that these sections (or rather churches) which existed for a time at Ephesus, had their own bishops permanently appointed over them. . . . Each one had not a particular congregation assigned him, over which he alone was pastor. All were the pastors of the Ephesian converts.'† That all the christians in a town should have a company of teachers in common, is, in Dr Davidson's opinion,

* Eccles. Pol., p. 121. † Ibid, pp. 110, 111.

the golden consummation, in comparison with which a habitual meeting of believers in one place is of little consequence: 'The habitual meeting together is not of importance, as long as the college of elders are considered equally the teachers and rulers of all, their services being distributed among the whole body.'* Here, then, we might have, by Dr Davidson's showing, a scriptural church, comprising a number of separate congregations, the members of which do not meet habitually in one place; and yet a habitual meeting in one place entered into the definition of a scriptural church at the beginning of the argument. But may the separate congregations have separate governments? No; Dr Davidson wholly condemns their separation, if they are to be dissociated and 'self-regulated churches.' They must have a common regulation. It is the divine will, contends Dr Davidson, that this be the permanent system. And who, then, are to regulate the congregations? The pastors alone? The college of elders? No; the pastors with the people. But how are pastors and people to meet in such a city as London, or even Glasgow? The single denomination with which I am connected has in Glasgow about twenty thousand members. What edifice could hold them all? It must not be answered that the argument respects primitive times, when christians were few; for Dr Davidson speaks of God's will as to the permanent government of his house. What, then, will the result be at meetings of the

* Eccles. Pol., p. 120.

general church? Such persons will come together as can do so, and others must stay away. By Dr Davidson's own supposition, the christians were constrained by circumstances to separate for worship. But if circumstances would not allow them to meet for worship, how could it allow them to meet for government, even if one house could contain them? Instead of all christians in a large town meeting, a few of them will assemble; and by these few the many will have their affairs managed, and their causes decided. But what sort of representation would this be—depending for its composition and character on fortuitous circumstances, or local and interested excitement? Dr Davidson contends that the churches were not subordinate to one another; and that 'external control never crosses the path of a Congregational church.'* But if the affairs of a sectional church are controlled by a chance-gathered or victory-seeking few, most of whom belong to other 'sectional churches,' is not this mutual subordination? and is not this external control of the very worst kind? Since representation, even on Dr Davidson's principles, must be had, unless he can bring together twenty, forty, or a hundred thousand persons into one apartment to transact ecclesiastical business, we think it better that the churches should understand who are to meet in name of the general church, and should have a voice in their appointment; should delegate 'wise men able to judge between brethren;' and thus obtain, not a

* Eccles. Pol., p. 136.

random or packed gathering, but a joint representative government, of the truest, freest, and most impartial description.

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## CHAPTER III.

*Duties have been assigned to the churches which they cannot perform in a state of isolation and independency.*

I HERE take for granted that when certain means are indispensable to a certain end, the appointment of the end is equivalent to the appointment of the means. If work has been devolved on churches which is impracticable for them singly, then an association of churches to all the extent needed for that work has all the imperativeness of divine requirement.

As examples, I notice the duties of securing a qualified ministry, of guarding the purity of the churches, and of extending the gospel.

### SECT. I.—*Churches are required to secure a qualified ministry.*

IT is true that scripture often addresses its appeals to pastors themselves, and to those who aspire after the pastoral office. But the responsibility of securing competent teachers has not been devolved exclusively on those who have to deliver instruction. Christians and christian societies are enjoined to take heed what they hear. They are forbidden to believe every spirit, and commanded to try the spirits whether they be of God. We find a church commended for

having proved them who said they were apostles and were not, and for having found them to be liars. In the first age of the gospel, churches had extraordinary aids in testing the competency of pretended instructors. Apostles had the signs of apostles, without which any alleged apostleship was to be accounted spurious. Among the gifts then conferred, was the power of discerning spirits; and while we have limited information as to the manner in which this endowment was exercised, no one will assert that it was never employed in ascertaining the competency or incompetency of spiritual functionaries.

On such grounds it will be universally conceded, I think, that churches are bound to do what in them lies to secure qualified teachers; and that where extraordinary aids, once enjoyed in fulfilling the obligation, have been withdrawn, there is the more need to take advantage of all available facilities. That isolated churches could judge well enough regarding some constituents of ministerial proficiency, I am far from denying. But who can read any faithful description of the qualifications indispensable to a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, and say that unlettered associations of christians may determine respecting all of them whether they be or be not possessed? If a minister make comments on the English translation of the Hebrew or Greek scriptures, can a congregation of peasants form an enlightened opinion whether these comments be just or unjust, erudite or ridiculous?

It is true that Congregationalists have their col-

leges, but no one church can have its college; and where christians of many churches found, regulate, and support the same seminary, the principle of association I am contending for is so far exemplified. There is here a practical avowal that young men must be trained for the ministry, and that as each church cannot maintain its own theological seminary, there must be one such institution owned and patronised by many christian societies. The teaching of the students, with the ultimate retention or expulsion of them, must be managed by some individual, or class of individuals, for the churches; and to all this extent the churches are represented in the performances of varied services most important to their interests. The Congregational Union of England and Wales tell us in their declaration of the faith, church order, and discipline of the Congregational or Independent Dissenters, that 'christian churches unitedly ought to consider the maintenance of the ministry in an adequate degree of learning as one of its especial cares.' Here, then, churches must act unitedly, and the work is '*its*,' not *theirs*—one, and not many—in relation to this object. This work, in not being avowedly and regularly accomplished by a joint government of churches, is to that extent defective and faulty. Different academical institutions, in the absence of such control, are liable to teach very conflicting doctrines. When abuses are admitted into these schools of learning, the churches have a difficulty of ascertaining the nature and amount of the evil, and a still greater difficulty in applying a remedy. But the grand objec-

tion to institutions so placed is, that attendance on them is not imperative, and may be avoided by all candidates for the ministry who dislike diligent study. Independent churches can choose ministers of any or no attainments. And so long as any man may preach, and any church may call the preacher, the standard of ministerial competency in a religious denomination can never be equally or vigorously upheld. Some ministers will be well taught, others will be teaching before they have begun to learn. In the same neighbourhood the able and accomplished pastor will have ignorant and upstart brethren, with whose mental habits he can have little sympathy, and on whose decent appearance in any joint enterprise he is afraid to stake his personal honour, and the good name of his religious connexion. I know how many exceptions to these statements could easily be produced. But I appeal to good information and christian candour, whether they do not hold extensively true, and whether their degree of truth do not commend a joint government of churches for the due regulation of theological instruction.

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## CHAPTER III.

### SECT. II.—*Churches are required to guard their purity.*

INDEPENDENTS not only concede this position, but contend for it resolutely. They think that their system affords peculiar advantage for the maintenance of

discipline. But a little reflection will show that the efficiency of Congregationalism in upholding a spiritual order has most serious exceptions. Suppose that a minister is the suspected party, and that he repels all surmises against his innocence, the ruled must then sit in judgment upon the ruler! This is surely an inversion of natural propriety and obvious seemliness. But, apart from any question of decorum, what security can there be in such a case for the administration of justice? A minister must have discharged his duties with little acceptance indeed, if he has not acquired considerable influence over his people; and how shall this same people divest themselves at once of all their deferential leanings and habitudes, so as to judge impartially and independently of his conduct? The rules commonly laid down by Independent writers for the management of ecclesiastical business by churches, are sadly unsuited to such a case. We are told by Dr Davidson that ministers 'preside in all meetings of the church.' Is a minister to preside when he is himself under trial? It is the doctrine of Dr Davidson that in 'meetings of the church no member should speak without permission of the elders, nor continue to do so when they impose silence.' If an elder (pastor) is impeached before his flock, and an attempt is made to convict him of crime, may he permit speech or impose silence, as the testimony of the witnesses is for or against him? Our Congregationalist brethren allow that every church should have a plurality of elders. Suppose that a church has two such office-bearers,

who mutually inculpate each other, is the church a fitting tribunal to judge between them? Is it not inevitable that two such influential persons will each have his party; or is not the tendency to this result so strong as, at least, to destroy all likelihood of unbiassed deliberation?

These remarks apply even to the government of a church in its own affairs, and to the maintenance of its own purity. But churches are under the necessity of exercising more than self-inspection, and of considering their alliances—of seeing to the character of other churches with whom they hold fellowship. Suppose that some church is ill-reported of. Every individual christian cannot seek and obtain personal satisfaction in regard to these rumours. Even the churches cannot do so singly and separately, or the suspected brotherhood would have nothing else to do than to answer interrogatories. The case must be examined into by a limited number, and others must act on their report. That report may be very unfavourable, and may infer such doctrinal error, or moral delinquency, as to induce a severance of all communion. Presbytery employs much the same means, and never extends its jurisdiction beyond reaching the same end. For we hold with the Congregational Union, that 'no church, nor union of churches, has any right or power to interfere with the faith or discipline of any other church, further than to separate from such as in faith or practice depart from the gospel of Christ.' This is the ultimatum with Presbyterians as well as Independents. There are differences,

no doubt, between the cases; but whether it be owing to the force of truth or prejudice, they seem to us to be greatly in favour of Presbytery. Under the Presbyterian system, the arbiters have been formed into a deliberative assembly, quite independently of any particular case, and cannot be suspected of coming into office in order to oblige a friend or serve a purpose. Where the members of a Congregational church cannot settle a dispute among themselves, and wish to refer their differences to others, not of their society, the channel of reference is not fixed and marked; and hence, of late years, we have seen appeals made in the same case to one set of arbiters after another, with exceedingly different and incongruous results; and sometimes the churches of one denomination have applied to ministers or members of other denominations, in order to secure an impartial mediation. They may be excellent people among whom these things happen; in many instances they are undoubtedly 'the salt of the earth,' and 'the lights of the world.' I remark on the facts in no spirit of fault-finding, but simply to suggest that these untoward casualties are unavoidable where churches have a reciprocal obligation, and yet refuse to fulfil it systematically. Perhaps there might be improvements among our Congregational friends short of a change of polity, and we would have cause to rejoice over these ameliorations. If Independency is to remain substantially what it is, would it not derive benefit from moulding into a system its present actings,—appointing, for example, the pastors and

deacons of a certain district the stated referees in that district, and then no suspicion could arise of packing a jury, in order to govern a verdict?

I know that some Independent churches have adopted such arrangements. The church at Torquay, presided over by Mr Hurry, a young Independent pastor of great excellence and promise, adopted the following resolution:—'That in the confidence that many unhappy disputes which have occasioned distress in other churches might have been altogether prevented, or their evil consequences greatly mitigated, if there had existed some method of seeking advice from wise and dispassionate christian bystanders; yet, without compromising the integrity and independence of the churches as under the alone authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, this church agrees that if any question should arise likely to involve strong difference of opinion, whether between the pastor and the members, or between the members themselves, no vote shall be taken thereon until the case has been fairly and impartially laid before the pastors and delegates of the Totness Division of the South Devon Congregational Union, and their opinion and advice thereon obtained. It being distinctly understood that the ultimate consideration of, and decision upon, the question or questions shall be reserved to this church, without pledging itself to give more than due and respectful consideration to the opinion and advice so obtained. It is hereby further agreed, that such opinion and advice shall be sought whenever, and only when at

least one-fourth part of the whole of the adult members of the church shall consider it desirable, on their giving an undertaking to defray the expense thereby incurred, unless in the opinion of the parties applied to for advice, such expense ought to be defrayed out of the church fund.'

Here the selection of arbiters or referees is not left indeterminate. Questions likely to involve differences of opinion are to be laid before the pastors and delegates of the Totness Division of the South Devon Congregational Union. Why might not others, why not all Congregational churches follow a like course? Dr Davidson thinks that the step is too much in the direction of Presbytery. I cannot perceive, if references are to be made to christian counsellors of other churches, why the communication should not be conducted in the least suspicious and most orderly manner. But if the simple fact of selecting advisers, irrespectively of any question at issue, would render the selection too Presbyterate, then it may be reasonable to doubt whether the joint and reciprocal duties of churches can be executed in a regular and efficient manner without assuming more or less a Presbyterian economy. The Independents of olden times were not so tremulous about the safety of their principles, as to forbid the associated and systematic action of churches in the maintenance of their common purity. 'No church,' says Dr Owen, 'is infallible in their judgment absolutely in any case; and in many, their determinations may be so doubtful as not to affect the conscience of

him who is censured. But such a person is not only a member of that particular church, but by virtue thereof, *of the Catholic Church also.* It is necessary, therefore, that he should be *heard and judged as unto his interest therein,* if he do desire it. And this can *no way be done* but by such synods as we shall immediately describe.'* In the same treatise he says, 'If it be reported or known by credible testimony, that any church hath admitted into the exercise of divine worship anything superstitious or vain, or, if the members of it walk like those described by the apostle, Philip. iii. 18, 19, unto the dishonour of the gospel, and of the ways of Christ, the church itself not endeavouring its own reformation and repentance, other churches, walking in communion therewith, by virtue of their common interest in the glory of Christ, and honour of the gospel, after more private ways for its reduction, as opportunity and duty may suggest unto their elders, ought to assemble in a synod for advice, either as to the use of farther means for the recovery of such a church, or *to withhold communion* from it in case of obstinacy in its evil ways.' The Independents of the Westminster Assembly characterise synods as 'an holy ordinance of God,' and declare 'that all the churches in a province being offended at a particular congregation, may call that single congregation to account; yea, *all the churches in a nation* may call one or more congregations to an account—that they may examine and admonish, and,

* Treatise on the Gospel Church, p. 414.

in case of obstinacy, declare them to be subverters of the faith—that Synods are of use to give advice to the magistrate in matters of religion—that they have authority to *determine concerning controversies of faith*—that their determinations are to be received with great honour, and conscientious respect, and obligation as from Christ—that, if an offending congregation refuse to submit to their determinations, they may withdraw from them, and deny church communion and fellowship with them.'*

The Sub-Committee of Agreements, composed of Presbyterians and Independents, and expressly appointed to take into consideration their differences of opinion, and to endeavour an union if possible, were unanimous in recommending this article. 'For the associating of churches, let there be in every county of this kingdom a certain number of select godly and able ministers of the word within that county to hear and determine the causes and differences in every congregation within the same; and let there be a certain number of select church governors (ruling elders) assistant unto them.'†

* The Presbyterians urged these admissions of Independent brethren as made by them 'in their disputes and otherwise,' and as 'sufficient to warrant not only the lawfulness of the use of Synods, but also of the standing use of them.' See 'Reasons presented by the Dissenting Brethren,' etc. London, 1648—p. 138. When this book was re-issued in 1652, it got another title, 'The Grand Debate concerning Presbytery and Independency by the Assembly of Divines, etc. By order of Parliament, 1652.'

† Papers for Accommodation, 1644, by a Sub-Committee of Divines of the Assembly and Dissenting Brethren. London, 1648.

## CHAPTER III.

### SECT. III.—*Churches are charged with the duty of extending the Gospel.*

CONGREGATIONALISTS are eager to show that the independence of churches does not infer their disseverance, and that while each is self-governed and complete within itself, they may be in various ways associated, so as to exemplify christian union under its fairest aspects. In support of this proposition, they refer us commonly to joint missionary enterprise. But I have always regarded this instance as a testimony to opposite views. The institution of general missionary societies somewhat veils the inaptitude of the Independent polity for great beneficent undertakings, and allows the adoption of Presbyterian principles, while the nomenclature of Presbyterians is steadfastly repudiated. But the true state of the facts is at once apparent when we suppose churches *in their ecclesiastical capacity* to put forth their energies for the conversion of the heathen. Is each church to deliberate and vote on the selection of the field; on the choice of the agent; on the settlement of disputes between missionaries and colonists, or among missionaries themselves? It becomes immediately evident, when the case is so presented, that each church cannot act under the given circumstances in its collective capacity; that if churches as churches are to accomplish any such work, they must have recourse to the appointment of representa-

tives. Dr Wardlaw sees and avows this consequence. He says, 'In regard to such union and co-operation as this, there is no occasion why the most rigid and uncompromising Independent should startle even at the word *delegation* itself. . . . The evil to which Congregationalism is opposed is not delegation, but authoritative delegation. If the delegation relates to objects that are altogether unconnected with the government of the churches—involving no interference with their respective admission of members, exercise of discipline, or in general the conduct of their own affairs, whether spiritual or temporal—if it regards only the prosecution of such common ends as the local or more extensive, the home or the foreign propagation of the gospel, . . . we are not sensible of the slightest infringement, by such delegated combination, of any one principle of the strictest Independency.'*

There is here a clear and explicit approval of delegated combination for the extension of the gospel; but the saving clauses by which Independent consistency is to be preserved I do not understand. What could a board of missionary directors do if they had not '*authoritative delegation?*' Evangelising operations would proceed slowly if they rested in the state of suggestion or proposal. And how is 'discipline' to be avoided if a missionary acts improperly, and has to be called to account for his disorderly conduct? The directors will then demand explanations and confes-

* Congreg. Indep., p. 369.

sions, and inflict censures; and if the offence be grave or be repeated, they will debate and decide the question, whether the offending agent should be stripped of his stewardship and dismissed from their service. Is this not discipline? What course more authoritative or disciplinarian could any presbytery or synod pursue in exercising superintendence over any of its members?

I wish that the advocates of Independency would descend from general terms, and stoop to a specification of details, by which they could show us that *Presbyterian missions* and *Independent missions* differ essentially in their mode of administration. Let them show us that the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church wields a more arbitrary power in conducting its missions than the Committee of any Congregationalist society contemplating the same objects, and then we may begin to suspect that Presbyterian government is conventional and imperious; but till then, we must be allowed to consider Presbytery the simplest form of energetic action, and always least objectionable where it is most frankly and unequivocally espoused.

I acknowledge that in the guidance of home missions the Congregationalist body has been jealous of centralisation, and that the Congregational Union of England and Wales has sedulously avoided the very appearance of an exercise of power. And what is the result? I am only giving utterance to the sentiments of some eminent Independents when I answer, inefficiency. At the meetings of the Union held at

Northampton in October, 1851, the Rev. Mr Bennett, as reported in the *British Banner*, October 22, said: 'To my mind the Congregational Union has been a do-nothing body. I was much struck with an observation which fell from the lips of Dr Campbell, when he said that you must have done with mere resolutions. . . . How do we stand as a body? Is the number of Independent churches much greater than it was 150 years ago? I have turned my attention to this subject of late, and I find that the county in which we now are, which has 304 parishes, contained, one hundred years ago, twenty-four Independent churches. Well, what is the number now? Only twenty-eight,—four churches in a hundred years. How comes that to pass? In Somerset and Devon—counties with which I am pretty well acquainted—I vouch for it, our position is not more favourable. There must be something wrong somewhere, or else it would not be so. By this time, Congregationalism ought to have diffused its leaven throughout the whole country. The reason of this stagnation I believe to be a want of united effort. We have got a certain phantom among us,—a kind of "familiar;" an idle dread of centralisation. You cannot propose an efficient plan or scheme of any kind; you cannot refer to anything that goes beyond mere talking, and put your foot on the region of doing, but you hear exclamations on all sides of "you are acting contrary to your principles." Why should it be so? Let me advise you to have a *bona fide* representation in this Union,—a delegate that somebody delegates,—one

that comes with credentials from those by whom he is sent; and let those who send such delegates say, whatever the majority of the Union agrees should be done, we pledge ourselves to do. I may not be in order, but I am saying what I think and believe. I have made these remarks because I feel that the subject is important. Let us get out of our present dead condition. Let us have some doing as well as talking. I believe it is right to spread our principles, whatever may be said about centralisation. We may say, in the language supposed to have been uttered by a fallen angel, whose spirit, however, we need not imitate,—

> "To be weak is miserable,
> Doing or suffering."

Some most excellent things may come into the world without parents, perhaps; but depend upon it the Congregational body will never be strong without unity of action.' Afterwards, Mr Bennett sent an able letter to the *Banner*, more deliberately and amply expounding his views. In that letter the following passages occur: 'I should rejoice and triumph in a *bona fide* Congregational Union,—in a Union that should include every one of our churches, concentrating and directing all their energies,—in a Union that should be like a great heart in the midst of us, sending forth streams of healthful and invigorating influence through our whole body to the extremities of the land. The Congregational Union, as it exists at present, is not such a body; and, in order that it may become so, or even approximate thereunto, two

things are, I think, absolutely essential. First: the Union must consist of a genuine and *bona fide delegation*. The men who come to it, to take a part in its deliberations and votes, must come, not because it is pleasant to themselves, and a source of personal gratification to themselves, but they must come because they are SENT. . . . I repeat, therefore, that a *genuine delegation* is essential to an effective Congregational Union. A second thing which it appears to me is essential, is, that the men who are thus *sent* should bring from the churches by whom they are sent, a distinct and positive *pledge*, that with reference to certain *specified* public objects, these churches will hold themselves bound to support, to the utmost of their power, by a strenuous, practical co-operation, such courses of action as the Congregational Union, by its deliberations and resolutions, may advise or appoint. . . .

'What the specified objects should be for the support of which the churches in connexion with the Congregational Union should be required to pledge themselves, it is not at all difficult to determine; they are already embraced in the field of action which the Union has prescribed for itself. I will mention but two, which, if they were worked and supported, not as they *are*, but as they *ought* to be, would be the glory of our denomination, would render the Union worthy of all honour, and all support, and give it a name and a place among the noblest institutions of the land.

'The first is the Colonial Missionary Society, the

object of which is, in every respect, grand and imposing. . . . But, in my judgment, the true vocation of the Congregational Union is essentially a *home* vocation. Its grand field of operation is our fatherland. It should be one vast Home Missionary Society. . . .

'Now, Sir, suppose the Union had for this great object an income of twenty-five or thirty thousand pounds a-year. So applied, what great and cheering results may reasonably be expected! and why should it not have such an income? What prevents it? Simply the want of a *bona fide* Congregational Union. That, and nothing else! Were all our churches *really* united—were each church to say by its delegate, "We feel the importance of this great object, and we pledge ourselves to the utmost of our power to support your plans; if you appoint that on a certain day a collection shall be made, we pledge ourselves to make it, whatever the proceeds may be;" why, then, the resources of the home missionary work would increase fourfold, and much more; and I ask, what danger to the future liberty of the churches could such pledges as these involve? The notion of such danger is, in my opinion, not only untenable, but absolutely foolish and ridiculous. I do not say that there are not other things for which the Congregational Union would be a suitable and important medium. I believe there are. As a great and dignified organ for the expression of the opinions of the body, in important and social political crises, I think its instrumentality may be made very powerful;

and again, when circumstances and public events may seem to demand it, I think fraternal counsel issuing from the Union in the form of circulars, to be read in the churches connected with it, may make it a source of most healthful influence to those churches. But if the churches in the Connexion were pledged to the above objects only, it would give a new aspect to the Union, and a vastly accelerated amount of usefulness to the whole body.

'And what prevents a consummation so desirable? Isolation: that is the name of the evil genius of our system! That is the torpedo which benumbs our energies, and paralyses the very sinews of combined effort! We have seen many forms of ecclesiastical despotism—Popish despotism, Episcopal Protestant despotism, Wesleyan Conference despotism; and we have pondered these things until we have brought ourselves almost to believe, that a hundred of our brethren cannot unite for any purpose of concentrated action, without concocting some plot against our spiritual liberties! We have stereotyped a law of jealousy, and tried to regard it as holy! We have crowned and almost worshipped a phantom, which is powerful only to paralyse! whose cold shadow freezes the very heart of action! a coward spirit, that, wherever it turns its face,

> "Back recoils, it knows not why,
> E'en at the sound itself has made!"

Our numbers, our wealth, our intelligence, and piety, are shorn of much of that influence which they ought

to exercise in this land, because we believe in the virtue of dislocation!

'If this evil is, indeed, ineradicable among us—if it is an incurable fatality—if the centrifugal force *must* be the master force of our system—why, then, let us give up the habit of *talking* about what we cannot *do*. Let us not pretend to form combinations for which we have an inherent incapacity, and let us also give up the fond hope that our denominational principles will in future ever make any great progress in this land! Even then we shall have a work to do, and not an unimportant one. Congregational Nonconformity will still be in years to come what it has been in years past—an embodied protest against the encroachments of human authority on that sacred territory where the Lord Christ alone is king; and this is no mean vocation; but I think we may do this and much more, and I fear, if we content ourselves with this, our Master and Lord will one day say to us, "This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone."'

The importance of these citations is my apology for their length. Mr Bennett recommends that churches should act energetically when promoting in common their common objects, and to such action he regards systematic delegation as absolutely indispensable. The appointments and the powers he demands for the delegates or representatives are, I think, both necessary and sufficient. Some may object to Mr Bennett as an authority, seeing he had withdrawn from the Congregational Union, and thus evinced a difference of

opinion from the generality of its members. I by no means wish to exhibit him as an exponent of the principles of the Union. That he was very far, however, from being singular in his views, and that some avowing opposite convictions were still partly on his side, abundantly appeared from speeches and correspondence connected with the same interesting occasion. The Rev. George Nicholson, in an excellent communication to the *Banner*, of date October 31, said: 'Those who were present on the occasion referred to, will remember that I neither *denied the facts* stated by my friend, Mr Bennett, nor ridiculed the importance attached to them. On the contrary, I expressed my satisfaction that they had been so courageously brought forward, and so attentively listened to, and hoped that they would receive the careful and earnest consideration which they appeared to me to deserve. . . . I am heartily glad that you have so fully reported my friend's able speech, and I doubt not it will, in one way at least, do good service to the churches, by opening their eyes to facts which are as instructive as they are humiliating.' The Rev. W. F. Buck says, in a letter to the *Banner*, dated October 25, 1851, 'Some plead for a system of isolated Independency, very different from the Congregationalism of Dr Owen, and having no warrant, as I consider, from the sacred scriptures, our great statute-book. Little in the way of aggression can be justly calculated on without both union and organisation.

'I by no means coincide with the representation

made at the late meeting of the Union, by the Rev. Mr Bennett, that up to the present time nothing has been effected. Considering the comparatively few years it has been in existence, and the impediments it has had to contend with, I think it has not only done much, but also much that is valuable. The recommendation of that gentleman, in reference to its government, I believe to be worthy of the most mature deliberation, unless a great division of opinion is likely to arise from its introduction.'

But the most important circumstance connected with Mr Bennett's speech and letter is found in the commendation given them by the editor of the *Banner*, one of the most vigorous and indefatigable writers of the present day. He prefaces Mr Bennett's letter with the following remarks: 'The lovers of concord, the real and enlightened friends of Independency, will read, with the deepest interest, the communications we publish to-day on that subject. They will take the luminous, the masterly, and every way admirable letter of Mr Bennett as his premeditated speech—his deliberate opinion. That letter gives us more satisfaction than we can well express. We could wish for it a thoughtful perusal by every minister, by every deacon, and by every enlightened member of the Independent body, in these realms. There is not in it one word we could desire to see altered, or which, by altering, could be improved. Had we begirded ourselves for the preparation of a similar manifesto, we do not think we could more correctly, clearly, or forcibly, have embodied our own views, opinions, and aspira-

tions. Our readers may, therefore, if they choose, accept them either as Mr Bennett's or our own. So far as he has gone, he completely meets our deliberate, long-entertained, and thoroughly-digested notions, on the subject of organisation. It is true, indeed, that we would add a few points, and carry some matters further; but to the extent of its deliverance, we entirely concur with him.' If some say that such observations are compatible with Congregationalism, and that to approve of them is to become a Congregationalist, I have only to reply—Be it so. Let churches have joint action worthy of the name, and I care little what it be called. When the sentiments I have quoted, which are none other than those of Independents generally in former times, shall be adopted and avowed by the greater part of Independents of our own day, I shall not be so desirous to show where we differ, as to show that our differences are immaterial, and that the season has come for united conferences, with a view to associated exertion, in order that errors which we all condemn may be arrested, that truths we all esteem may be advanced, and that the cherished distinctions and trophies of warring sects may wax old, and vanish away amid the brightening glory of the one church of the living God.

Since the preceding remarks were written, I have had my attention called by a much-esteemed friend* to a very interesting publication, 'The Congregational Year-Book for 1853.' It is most gratifying to read

* W. P. Paton, Esq. of Glasgow.

the accounts there given of the London Congregational Church Building Society, and of Chapel Extension in Lancashire. Most fervently do I wish these, and all like operations, God speed. From the report of the proceedings of the Congregational Union for 1852, I am rejoiced to perceive that the constitution of the Union has undergone amendments, which are likely to be productive of excellent results. Such organisation is in progress as seems fitted, by the divine blessing, to induce vigorous action and immense usefulness.

## CONCLUSION.

In bringing this Treatise to a conclusion, I desire to impress the friends of Presbytery with the conviction, that they will best secure approval for their Presbyterian polity by commending it in practice. Let the excellence of the tree appear in the gracefulness of its proportions, the freshness of its vegetation, and above all, in the abundance and salubrity of its fruit. Already Presbytery has undergone, in several features, great improvements in Scotland. That it should be immediately perfected by the Reformers, when they had just emerged from a corrupt and persecuting church, was more than could be expected. In leaving Rome, they brought with them some of its intolerance, which they embodied in their new system of ecclesiastical polity. Mr Lawson has little difficulty in proving that 'the Presbyterians of Scotland' were chargeable with 'tyrannical proceedings,' especially in 'trying and punishing cases of scandal, at the end of the sixteenth century.' I have now before me scroll minutes of the Inverness Presbytery,*

* These scroll minutes have been kindly sent me by my esteemed friend, the Rev. John Grant of Roseneath. He says of them: 'It would seem that they remained in the family of the Clerk. The book came into the hands of an auctioneer in Inverness about a year before the Disruption, and he gave it to me, having made out of the old writing so much as to know that it had something to do with Presbytery.'

recording the proceedings of that Court through a number of years, beginning with 1632, and showing, amid the changes of church government, little relaxation of penal discipline in the first half of the seventeenth century. We have there, on the 22d August, 1633, Mr Lachlan Grant, a member of Presbytery, 'accusit for his lang absence, nowe thre dayes togidder. He anserit for the first daye he was seik of ane cauld, and culd nocht be hard speik, . . . for the secund that he was with the bischop, meaning yat yai war threatting to demeiss him of the gleb of Dalarassie, . . . and for the third daye (when) ye exerceis was don or he cam in, answerit that he haid evill weather.' These apologies seem to be tolerably good. Yet, when Mr Grant 'was removit,' the Presbytery 'decernit him to pay xx£ mo^le^.' In another minute, I see Donald Makanes ordained to make repentance in his own kirk three successive Sabbaths, at the foot of the stool of repentance, and to pay a penalty of £20 for cutting his neighbour's kail, and breaking his dyke. Examples of the same sort of 'dealing' abound in these records. We have a contrast to them presented in the declaration of the church with which I am connected, that 'the word court,' as used in its Rules, etc., 'simply denotes ministers and elders regularly met for the discharge of their deliberative duties, in session, presbytery, or synod; and that it conveys no idea of authority beyond that of spiritual administration.'

There is still, however, room for amendment; and without dreading the advantage that may be taken

of a confessional strain of remark, I shall specify, in a few particulars, where improvement in the working out of Presbyterian government seems to me to be demanded:—

1. There should be less jealousy than is sometimes manifested of unofficial christian beneficence. I hold, and I have endeavoured to prove, the divine appointment of the eldership. But since we find that wise men, not formally invested with office, were, by apostolic direction, set to judge on questions deeply affecting the honour of the church, we should be slow to reject the aid of such wisdom, even in ecclesiastical proceedings, where it is still available for like service. An official agency is valuable, not only for what it can do itself, but as bringing into action all the graces and resources of the church; and a punctilious dread of compromising our official status in permitting others to work with us, and hailing their co-operation, is not sanctioned, as I think, by the facts, the precepts, or the spirit of the New Testament.

2. We should do more than is now done to elevate the qualifications and efficiency of the Ruling as distinguished from the Teaching Eldership. That scripture makes such a distinction among presbyters has, I trust, been sufficiently proved. But the distinction has been too often widened into a chasm. Variety within a species has been enlarged into a specific difference. On this practical error both Episcopalians and Independents have reared their most formidable engines of assault against our Ses-

sional system. They have asked why the apostles so generally speak of presbyters as one institution, if the teaching and ruling presbyters were then as wide apart as are ministers and elders in our own day. They have inquired what we gain by contending for Presbyterian ordination, and then excluding the great majority of presbyters from the privilege of ordaining.*

Our present usage admits of some reply to such strictures. If the writers of the New Testament often speak of presbyters collectively and as one body, we also speak of the members of presbyteries or synods without distinguishing the ruling and teaching elders of whom the court is composed.

It is true, also, that the having or wanting a collegiate education makes more difference now than could have originally subsisted. But still the one term,

* On this subject Dr Onderdonk says, 'We have consulted Buck's Dictionary, and find that in the Church of Scotland, the pastoral are distinguished from the ruling elders in two particulars —*they* only lay on hands in ordaining pastors—and the presiding officer of the presbytery is chosen from among them. We have made inquiries also concerning the *practice* in Presbyterian ordinations in this country, and learn that the ruling elders do *not* impose hands with the pastors—though the opinion is not unsupported, that they *ought* to do so. . . . The General Assembly declares that ordination is to be "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, according to the apostolic example;" it declares *the* "presbytery," the only one it defines, to include ruling elders; these, therefore, to conform to "the apostolic example," ought to lay on hands, but they do not; therefore, by its own showing, the ordinations in the communion of the General Assembly, are *not* "according to the apostolic example."'—*Episcopacy*

'bishop,' so often applied to elders, whether they ruled or taught, and without any mark of discrimination, shows that they were more upon a footing in the primitive church than in the present working of Presbytery. At their meetings for public worship, all the elders occupied one bench or platform, facing the people, to indicate the sameness of their order; and he who was to preach took his place with them, and delivered his message from amid his brethren.*

I do not say this practice should be resumed, though I would not object to its restoration; but I do say there should be more of the parity of which it

*Tested by Scripture*, pp. 76, 77. In 1851, March 11, the Presbytery of which I am a minister entered on the remit from the Synod in relation to the participation of Ruling Elders in the imposition of hands at the ordination of ministers. 'After long and friendly discussion, it was moved and agreed that the best mode of composing differences on this subject, would be that of appointing the moderator, in every case of ministerial ordination, to impose hands in the name of the Presbytery.' The London ministers, in their Divine Right of Church Government, regarded this mode of ordination with favour. 'Paul with the Presbytery,' they say, 'ordained Timothy with imposition of hands; it may be of Paul's hands in name of the whole Presbytery.' In the margin they support this view by Calvin's authority: 'As Calvin judgeth in Comment. ad 2 Tim. i. 6.'—*Jus Divinum, etc. Appendix*, p. 268. London, 1647.

* Some Episcopalians, who substantially admit this fact, attempt to uphold the superiority of bishops, by alleging that the preaching elder was the bishop, emphatically so called, and that he had also a different sort of seat from the elders on either side of him. In the primitive church, says 'our learned Thorndike,' to use the language of Bishop Stillingfleet, 'the presbyters were wont to sit by themselves in a half circle at the east end of the church, with their

gave evidence. If not in their seats, at least in their services, the elders should be in view of the people, and valued as the pastors with whom they co-operate. We need not expect to reach an end so important without the use of reasonable means, and surely more pains might be taken to qualify elders for ruling well. Laudable zeal has been shown to institute ministers' libraries. Is there no need for elders' libraries? And might there not be more frequent meetings with them and addresses to them, and improving engagements assigned them, having a direct tendency to stimulate their reading of books, and render it profitable? Some time ago there was a noble movement among elders to improve their own order. Let them not languish in this enterprise. Let them magnify their office. Let them show that they have a high conception themselves of the trust confided to them, and others will hold it in like estimation: but if they let down the office, what wonder if others trample it under foot? And how are they to magnify it? By demeaning themselves consequentially—by walking with the air and strut of office? Assuredly not. They must qualify themselves for ruling, and then rule with diligence. The church, through all its sections of young and old, rich and poor, near and remote, must feel the pervad-

faces turned to the faces of the people, the deacons standing behind them, as waiting on them, but the bishop on a throne (!) by himself, in the midst of the presbyters' seats.'—*Right of the Church, etc.*, chap. iii. p. 93. They must be very intent on securing a throne for the bishop, who find one in the simple arrangements of the primitive christians.

ing efficacy of their vigilant inspection. Then it will be seen that they have plenty to do who have only to rule; and wonder will cease to be entertained that labourers so estimable and invaluable have been classed by the apostles with ministers of the word, as participating in the same superintendence of the church, and similarly entitled to be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake.

3. The representative principle might be more equally acted out by us. In some instances the application of it is rigorous; in others loose and partial. Ministers holding the most important secretaryships, and elders the most important treasurerships, are not 'members of court,' unless they happen to be so by official connexion with some particular congregation. If they speak, it is by sufferance, and only in relation to their own particular business; and they may not vote at all. This is strict rule for honourable functionaries who represent the church at large in some of its most important interests. Along with this strictness there is commensurate laxity. Civil society is not more unequally represented in parliament, than is christian society in our presbyteries. If one church contains twelve hundred members, and if twelve churches have each a hundred members, the first twelve hundred people have two representatives, and the second twelve hundred have twenty-four representatives—the same numerical constituency is twelve times more adequately represented. Such facts deserve at least consideration.

4. Full advantage has not yet been taken of the

vast power which assembled elders might wield for practical purposes. Presbyteries and synods have been called courts of review. The name points the injured to valuable means of redress; but it fosters a fallacy if it encourage any to think that the sole or chief use of presbyterate gatherings is to settle disputes. There has been already a vast improvement in this province. Appeal cases have been diminishing in number: there was not one of them at the last meeting of the United Presbyterian Synod, and their place was occupied by the prosecution of fitting measures for the maintenance and extension of religion at home and abroad. But though we have got upon the right road, we are far from our destination. The good that a synod might do is inestimable. The most devoted philanthropist is feeble in his isolation. When he joins a church he has an admirable opportunity of engaging fellow-worshippers to be fellow-workers, and to advance in concert with him the common salvation. But what shall we think of the power of communicative zeal, judiciously developed in a synod or assembly, which acts on many hundreds of churches and over the whole extent of a nation? If the nature of this influence were more duly appreciated, it would be more energetically put forth; many churches and pastors now pining in neglect would be visited and revived; the choicest religious literature would be showered upon our people; education for all the young in the charge of the church would be adequately provided and indefatigably worked. 'Our waste and desolate places, and the land of our destruc-

tion'—the regions which appeared to be solitudes, they were so few and destroyed—would become too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and a cry would be heard in many quarters from our crowded churches, 'The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.' To none so much as to a concourse of ecclesiastical office-bearers is this commission given, 'Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.'*

5. The friends of Presbyterian government should turn to better account the facilities which it affords for promoting the union of churches. Even where churches form separate denominations, they might have united action, of varied character and high importance, through their representative assemblies. But churches denominationally separated should seek more than co-operation; they should aim at incorporation. Happily partition walls have been falling in Scotland. The United Presbyterian Church is composed of three denominations; and though they have been but a short time amalgamated, they seem to have already forgotten their differences, and to be exhibiting, through all the range of their fellowship, the good and pleasant spectacle of brethren dwelling together in unity. The Free Church, by its attractive force, has been also drawing smaller bodies into

* Is. liv. 2, 3.

its communion. Would that the same career were pursued in England! A union of the English evangelical Presbyterians would bring to them new life, new strength, a new footing in public estimation, and would rear a barrier, infinitely more effective than public meetings or indignant protestations, against the formidable encroachments of the power of Rome. I am happy to introduce here a resolution passed by the Presbytery of which I am a member: '1852, March 9. In regard to the overture "for the formation of a Synod in England, to consist of the ministers and representative elders south of the Tweed," sent down by Synod for the consideration of presbyteries, it was agreed to report that the Presbytery do not deem it advisable that a separate Synod should in the meantime be formed; but believing that important ends may be served by our presbyteries in England meeting together and consulting on measures that affect the interests of Presbyterianism south of the Tweed, are of opinion that all facilities for this purpose should be afforded by the Synod, and *that the Synod should favourably regard any movement towards closer union between the various bodies of evangelical Presbyterians in England.*'* When the evangelical Presbyterians of England shall have become united, the next question may be, how far the principles of Owen furnish a basis for the union of Presbyterians and Independents.

* This extract, and another preceding it, were kindly furnished, on application, by my friend, the Rev. George Jeffrey, our efficient Presbytery Clerk.

I will not extend farther these suggestions. Whatever causes may, in the providence of God, conduce to the result, we have the most decisive warrant for expecting prosperity to the one church of Christ: 'For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.'* Happily our differences do not preclude us from unitedly imploring, even now, a fulfilment of these great and precious promises. 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.'†

* Is. li. 3. † Ps. cxxii. 6-9.

# APPENDIX.

## OBJECTIONS URGED AGAINST THE POSITION THAT 'THE SEVEN' WERE DEACONS.*

I. It has been argued that the seven mentioned in the sixth chapter of the Acts could not have been Congregational deacons, since they were appointed for the aggregate church of Jerusalem, which must have comprised, as appears from the number of christians, many subdivisional churches. Whether there was in any sense a plurality of churches in Jerusalem, is a question which has been elsewhere considered. Supposing this fact to be established, I do not perceive that it forms a conclusive argument for the view on behalf of which it is here adduced. (1.) If almoners are needed for an association of churches, they may be needed for distinct christian societies, and no reason can be assigned *in principle* for engaging their services in one of these relations and not in the other. (2.) It is not certain that each of the seven had to no extent a sectional trust. The parties I am reasoning with understand that the apostles in preaching distributed themselves among various assemblies, and addressed each his own hearers. But that there was any such apportioning of apostolic labour, is not declared in the sacred narrative. And if, in the absence of direct averment, we may infer that the apostles preached to different audiences, why may we not, in the absence of direct averment, similarly infer that the deacons, besides doing work of a general nature, distributed their services among the several quarters of the city and societies of worshippers

* See p. 39.

as the case demanded. 'Seven such individuals,' says Neander, 'were chosen; the number being accidentally fixed upon as a common one, or being adapted to seven sections of the church.'* If the seven had sectional duties, or, in other words, duties distinctively Congregational, the argument from the aggregate nature of their trust falls to the ground.

II. It has been asked if the office of deacon (as its functions are understood by us) be so essential, how the church of Jerusalem managed to do without it for several years. We hold, let it be remembered, that the superior office includes the inferior; and while Jerusalem was favoured with the presence and labours of *many superior officers*, the appointment of inferior officers was less necessary.

III. Because benevolent contributions made to the poor saints in Jerusalem at one time by the church at Antioch, and at another time by the churches of Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia were put in charge of 'the apostles and elders,' the inference has been drawn that 'the seven must have discontinued their distinctive employment,' and that 'their functions must have reverted to the parties who originally held them.' But it is surely easier to suppose that the apostles and elders, in the exercise of a general superintendence, were the first acknowledged in such matters, and afterwards devolved them on appropriate subordinate agencies, than to imagine that the apostles resumed the serving of tables when the cause of Christ was rapidly extending, and the care of all the churches was still coming on them daily.

IV. Much stress has been laid on the omission of the term deacons where (Acts xxi. 8) 'the seven' are mentioned. If the case had admitted of it, would not the writer have said 'the seven deacons?' It is

* History of the Planting, etc., p. 39.

not certain that he would. In some instances the apostles are simply called 'the twelve,' and after the death of Judas 'the eleven,' where their apostleship is neither forgotten nor denied. Circumstances may render a *number* even more emphatic than an *appellation;* and there was much to give emphasis to the election of the first *seven* almoners. Amid many of the same class, and possibly many sevens similarly employed, they might still be distinguishable as 'the seven' emphatically so designated. It is no reply that the twelve are often called apostles, and the seven never once called deacons. The first functionaries who served tables after the apostles are not often spoken of in any form, to give us varied diction regarding them; and all we are now called to show is, that they might be deacons, and yet be called the *seven*, as the others were certainly apostles, and yet called the *twelve* and the *eleven.*

V. It has been argued that there were probably deacons in the church at Jerusalem before the seven were appointed. The persons who carried out the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira are called (Acts v. 6) young men; and instances are adduced of servants, as such, being so distinguished, irrespectively of their age. Examples are also brought to prove that these servants are sometimes, though not in the New Testament, called deacons. May not these be the deacons spoken of in the epistles of Paul? In that case it is argued they had nothing specially to do with the management of funds, or seven others would not have been appointed expressly to fulfil this duty.

This chain of induction is weak in several links. If we suppose the young men mentioned in the sixth chapter of the Acts to have been servants, there is no likelihood that they were the same order of functionaries as the deacons mentioned by Paul. Had the deaconship been in existence and operation for

several years in Jerusalem, the presumption is, that those invested with the office would have had its distinct appropriate title given them, and been called *deacons*, and not 'young men.' Why should the same class be called deacons in the epistles and young men in the Acts? Again, between such work as that of carrying out dead bodies and the high qualifications which Paul demanded in deacons, there is no such correspondences as to suggest identity of trust. These considerations create a probability that even if the young men were servants, they were not the Pauline deacons. But it is not certain that the phrase 'young men' points in Luke's narrative to any kind of office. They are twice introduced in the course of the same chapter, and where the English version uses the same terms regarding them, they are denoted by different terms in the original. Now they are called νεωτεροι neoteroi, and now νεανισκοι neaniskoi. This does not look as if they had an official trust with an appropriated designation in established use. The supposition of office is not needed. The social usages of the Jews will sufficiently explain why age was spared such service as young men are declared by Luke to have performed. And though the construction in the original has been pleaded as favouring an official sense of the words, eminent scholars have controverted this plea, and pronounced it to be nugatory. Dr Neander says, 'It is far from clear that, in the last quoted passage of the Acts, the narrative alludes to persons holding a distinct office in the church: it may very naturally be understood of the younger members, who were fitted for such manual employment, without any other eligibility than the fact of their age and bodily strength. And, therefore, we are not to suppose that a contrast is intended between the servants and ruling elders of the church, but simply between the younger and older

members.'* My friend Professor Lindsay says, 'With respect to the passage in Acts v. 6, it cannot be made clear, I think, that the phrase *οἱ νεωτεροι* means any class of officers. It is true the form of expression is the very same as would be employed if a special class of officers were referred to, and therefore, if in any preceding chapter mention had been made of certain young men being employed to serve, then it could not be doubted that the reference here was to them. But there being no such previous mention, the question comes to be, how is the article to be accounted for? If nothing would account for it but the supposition of young men having been previously appointed to do service, then that supposition would be rendered highly probable. But the article may be otherwise accounted for. It may be employed to distinguish the younger men from the older men present at the time. The passage, therefore, furnishes no proof that *οἱ νεωτεροι* means a certain class of officers.'

VI. It has been objected, that if we place the funds of the church in the charge of deacons, we give them a dangerous power, and in fact place all other parties in the church at their mercy. But this objection would apply equally to managers, who have now the principal charge of ecclesiastical revenues in some Presbyterian churches. Why are these managers not found to be formidable to sessions? The answer is, that elders are eligible to be managers, and that the number of elders admitted into the management sufficiently precludes, in almost all cases, the undue depression of their order. The same result would still more certainly follow if all elders, in virtue of their eldership, were held to possess the lower office in the higher, and therefore to be entitled to participate in the business of the deacons' council with those who are simply appointed to the deaconship.

* History of the Planting, etc., vol. i., p. 36.

These, and like objections, may be somewhat perplexing: but I consider them to have little weight against the evidence which has been adduced for the deaconship of the seven.

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## SCOTCH CONFESSION OF 1560, AND APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION. See p. 169.

Mr Lawson, in terms still more explicit than I have quoted in the body of this work, says of the Confession of 1560, which repudiates the doctrine of apostolical succession, 'This Confession is chiefly remarkable as having been the common creed of the Established Episcopal Church in subsequent times, and of the Presbyterians, until they adopted the Westminster Confession.'*

* Hist. of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, from Refor. to the Revol., p. 44.

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